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# **AMERICAN PRESIDENTS**



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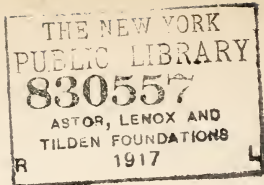
*Their Individualities and Their  
Contributions to American Progress*

BY

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**TO THE  
PARLOR CLUB  
OF  
LAFAYETTE, INDIANA**





# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

PAGE

FROM WASHINGTON TO JACKSON . . . . . 9

Washington—John Adams—Jefferson—Madison—  
Monroe—John Quincy Adams.

## CHAPTER II

FROM JACKSON TO LINCOLN . . . . . 63

Jackson—Van Buren—William Henry Harrison—  
Tyler—Polk—Taylor—Fillmore—Pierce—Buchanan.

## CHAPTER III

FROM LINCOLN TO WILSON . . . . . 99

Lincoln — Johnson — Grant — Hayes — Garfield —  
Arthur — Cleveland — Benjamin Harrison — Mc-  
Kinley — Roosevelt — Taft — Wilson.

## CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN . . . . 117



FROM WASHINGTON TO JACKSON



# AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

## CHAPTER I

### FROM WASHINGTON TO JACKSON

THE bold, determined, and aggressive personality of the Progressive candidate for the presidency of the United States in 1912 has been much commented upon in recent years both at home and abroad. Whether we agree in our estimates of the ability and real worth of Theodore Roosevelt or not, we will all admit, I think, that he is a man of strong individuality whose positive views on a great variety of topics find free, forceful, and sometimes even copious expression. His vigorous personality has made him the subject of much contention. His acts and utterances have been warmly commended and violently assailed. He has also been frequently compared with his predecessors in the presidential office, sometimes in commendation, but often in disparagement. One writer remarked not long since that Mr. Roosevelt lacked in a marked degree the essential attributes of the typical

President of the United States. I wondered at the time who this typical President might be. Would it be the dignified Washington, the graceful Pierce, the sympathetic Lincoln, the stubborn Johnson, the intellectual Benjamin Harrison, or the lovable McKinley? Or might it possibly be none of these but only an imaginary composite character who never in reality occupied the presidential chair at all? A quest for the typical President would, in all probability, prove fruitless, as far as immediate results are concerned, but a study of the personal traits and individual characteristics of the twenty-seven men who have occupied the presidential chair in the last hundred and twenty-eight years ought to be an interesting one. In making such a study one cannot fail to be impressed with the great variety of the personalities and abilities of the American Presidents. There is no monotony in the panorama.

The first President of the United States has always stood as the personification of dignity, poise, and sound judgment. He was not as eloquent as Patrick Henry, as scholarly as James Madison, or as brilliant as Alexander Hamilton; yet as a useful public man he excelled all three.

His substantial qualities in statesmanship were recognized as early as 1774. He was a member of the First Continental Congress which met in Philadelphia in September of that year. Patrick Henry was also a member. Upon his return home Henry was asked whom he considered the greatest man in the assembly. His reply was: "If you speak of eloquence, Mr. Rutledge, of South Carolina, is by far the greatest orator; but if you speak of solid information and sound judgment, Col. Washington is unquestionably the greatest man on the floor." This statement represents the view of his contemporaries as well as the judgment of historians. By his good sense and rare mental poise he dominated public affairs in a quiet, all-pervasive, and exceedingly effective manner.

Washington's unusual physical strength and impressive personal appearance were a valuable asset to him as surveyor, soldier and statesman. Even while young in years he was mature in both body and mind. The surveyor of seventeen was a sturdy and self-reliant lad. The young frontiersman of twenty-one commended himself to Governor Dinwiddie, of Virginia, as the proper man to carry the famous

message of warning to the French after other men had failed. "Here is the very man for you," said Lord Fairfax to the Governor; "young, daring, and adventurous, but yet sober-minded and responsible, who only lacks opportunity to show the stuff that is in him." Washington met every expectation. He carried the message from Williamsburg, Virginia, to Fort Le Boeuf in northwestern Pennsylvania, and placed it in due time in the hands of General St. Pierre. He then returned to Virginia with the reply of the French commander, having travelled 750 miles in the dead of winter through unbroken forests and over rivers, rough with floating ice. The tact and endurance which he displayed on this journey augured well for his future achievements. "From that moment," says Washington Irving, "he was the rising hope of Virginia"—and, he might have added, of the entire country.

When, at the age of forty-three, he was chosen commander-in-chief of the Continental army and appeared before Congress, modestly but unflinchingly, to accept the trust, he must have "looked the part." "Mankind," said Senator Lodge, "is impressed by externals, and those



who gazed upon Washington in the streets of Philadelphia felt their courage rise and their hearts grow strong at the sight of his virile, muscular figure as he passed before them on horseback, stately, dignified, and self-contained. The people looked upon him, and were confident that this was a man worthy and able to dare and do all things."

Nature had been kind to him. She had endowed him with great physical strength and a rare personal presence. He was six feet two inches tall and weighed over two hundred pounds. His ordinary shoes were number eleven and his military boots two sizes larger. His hands were so large that he was obliged to have his gloves made to order. He was Egyptian in his massiveness. Houdon, the sculptor, speaks of the "majesty and grandeur of Washington's form and features," and "every one who met him told of the commanding presence, the noble person, the ineffable dignity, and the calm, simple and stately manners. No man ever left Washington's presence without a feeling of reverence and respect amounting almost to awe."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lodge, *George Washington*, Volume II, pp. 379-80.

In his mental as well as in his physical make-up Washington was a symmetrical and well-developed character. He was so well rounded and so nicely balanced that to some he seemed commonplace. No greater mistake could be made. He was not dramatic, spectacular or sensational in any sense, but he was far removed from mediocrity. His judgment was rarely at fault. He was usually very slow in coming to a conclusion but when once he had done so he maintained his position with a courage as fine and true as that of Sir Galahad of old. He was substantial, dependable and circumspect. His appeal was to the intellect rather than to the emotions. As the "great silent man" of his time he influenced public opinion by means of his example and his writings rather than through the medium of the spoken word. He was not a speech-maker and yet he swayed and moved men.

Too big and broad for State lines, he became the personification of American nationalism. Matthew Arnold and Goldwin Smith have called Washington an Englishman, but to my mind he was a thorough American. He was, in fact, one of the first men in the country to lay aside

colonialism and to grasp the national spirit. He saw as clearly as any one and more clearly than most men that the salvation of his country lay in national unity. In working out this national unity he turned his face away from Europe and towards the New World. He was distinctly an American—a different type from Lincoln but none the less truly American.

His spiritual nature was in entire harmony with his mental and physical being. He was confident, not harrassed by doubts and had no tendency towards the sensational in religion. He was a vestryman in the Protestant Episcopal Church and the dignified service of the Anglican worship with its stately liturgy and beautiful forms was to him both appealing and satisfying. He was practical rather than mystical in his religious conceptions and in this matter, as in everything else, had a way of looking facts squarely and concretely in the face.

The reading public has always had a fairly adequate and correct comprehension of the official side of Washington's character; but his private life and personal traits have, until a comparatively recent time, been more or less veiled in mystery. "Gen. Washington," re-

marked Professor McMaster, "is known to us, and President Washington. But George Washington is an unknown man." Many of the impressions, too, which the public had formed of Washington as a man were based upon mistaken notions. Mason Weems, of hatchet and cherry tree fame, represented him as a faultless and insipid prig; Professor McMaster speaks of his "cold heart;" to Col. Ingersoll he was "a steel engraving;" and to Carlyle, "a Cromwell with the juice squeezed out." It was his misfortune, as Senator Lodge has remarked, to be "lifted high up into a lonely greatness, and unconsciously put outside the range of human sympathy." By means of recent investigations, however, the life story of Washington has been humanized. The veil which has hitherto concealed the private man has been, in part at least, drawn aside, and it is now seen that Washington was "fed by the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer" as other mortals were. In some respects he was intensely human. He had a weakness for gold lace, silk stockings, and silver spangles. His liking for

fine feathers never quite forsook him. He was still dancing at sixty-four; he was fond of the theater; and his wine cellar at Mount Vernon was not usually empty. He liked a good horse race and often entered his own animals, placing a modest bet on the outcome. While a Virginia planter he occasionally went fox hunting on Sunday, and more than once he complained that while attending church on the Sabbath morning he was compelled to listen to some very "lame discourses." Neither was he immune from those plebeian diseases which now harrass mankind. He suffered, at different times, from measles, smallpox, malaria, and tooth-ache; and late in life he solemnly put it on record that his false teeth were a misfit.

He also did some things which would have given the good Parson Weems a nervous shock. At Kip's Landing, when the troops were not behaving themselves to his liking, he expressed himself in language about as stormy and violent as the mother tongue is capable of. And again at Monmouth, when he found Lee's army retreating, General Scott tells us that he "swore like an angel from heaven,"—however that may be.

In affairs of the heart he was likewise human. While still a school boy, for example, he loved to romp with one of the largest girls, and the affair became serious forthwith; at the age of sixteen he wrote in passionate strains of a certain young lady whom he called his "Low Land Beauty;" and be it said that this "Low Land Beauty" might have been Miss Lucy Grimes or Miss Mary Bland or Miss Betsy Fauntleroy,—so impartially did the young lover bestow his attentions. No one of them could claim a monopoly of his favor, and the identity of the young lady in question has never been disclosed. After retiring from one of his campaigns in the Old French War he very readily and willingly capitulated at another "Fort Necessity," and the fair charmer in this case is again rather vaguely referred to as "Mrs. Neil." A little later, and at this time he was only twenty-four, he lost his heart to Mary Philipse, only to be rejected in favor of Lieutenant-Colonel Roger Morris. During the Revolution Morris was a Tory and fled from the country for safety. Let us hope, for the sake of poetic justice, that Washington had the pleasure of speeding the parting guest while he was en route, let us say,



to Halifax. However that may be, the wounds which were made by the beauty of Mary Philipse upon the heart of the ardent suitor were only superficial and two years later we find him at the feet of Mrs. Martha Dandridge Custis, widow of a wealthy Virginia planter, whose demise had occurred only seven short moons before. The courtship was, in military language, short, sharp, and decisive, and resulted in an engagement in about three weeks. Owing to the stern necessities of the War the marriage was deferred a few months, which seemed an interminable period to the two persons most intimately concerned. Washington was now but twenty-six years of age, but was, it would seem, rich in experience in matters pertaining to courtship; for in addition to the instances already mentioned there were several other maidens of the time who received coy glances and side-long looks from this dashing young Virginia Cavalier. Taking it all in all, it must be admitted, I think, that the "Father of his Country" did possess some few traits and personal characteristics not ordinarily exhibited by steel engravings or by Cromwells with the juice squeezed out. Washington him-

self was not deceived in these matters, if the world was. "That I have foibles," he said, "and perhaps many of them, I shall not deny. I should esteem myself, as the world would, vain and empty, were I to arrogate perfection."

And now after the lapse of more than a century, and with the returns all in, thinking and well-informed people are disposed, notwithstanding Lowell's flight in the famous "Commemoration Ode," to rank George Washington as the "first citizen" of the American Republic.

In making the transition from Washington to John Adams, the presidential curve dips sharply downward. Adams was a peculiar man, strongly individualistic both in appearance and in character. He has been described as being of "middle height, vigorous, florid, and somewhat corpulent, quite like the typical John Bull." There was little apparently in his Anglican style of architecture to commend him to the patriots of the Revolutionary days, but in his talents and disposition there was much.

Adams was a native of Massachusetts and was graduated from Harvard College in 1755 at the age of twenty. He was as unlike his pred-



ecessor in office as a man could well be. There can be little in common in any circumstances between the Puritan of New England and the Cavalier of Virginia. In this case there was practically nothing. The whole background of their lives was different. Their viewpoints also differed in many respects. Washington was a surveyor and farmer, while Adams was a school teacher and lawyer. Washington was a soldier, while Adams came from civil life. Washington's school education was limited and he never went to college at all; Adams had been well educated both in preparatory school and college. In religion Washington was orthodox, while Adams was inclined to free thinking. Socially, Washington was of the aristocracy of the Old Dominion, while the Adams family held a middle rank in Massachusetts. The names of the students of Harvard College at this time were arranged in the catalogue in the order of the social standing of their parents and the young Adams stood fourteenth in a class of twenty-four on this basis. In taste, temperament and tact, also, they were widely separated. Senator Maclay, a contemporary, once remarked of Washington, "The President's amiable deport-

ment smooths and sweetens everything." Adams, on the other hand, quarrelled with almost all of his associates in public life. He uttered petty and spiteful things about Washington, and the Federalist party was not big enough to contain himself and Hamilton at the same time. He looked with contempt upon Jefferson and his whole philosophy of government; he abused Franklin and spoke of his "extreme indolence and dissipation," and he peremptorily dismissed some of the members of his cabinet from office. He was particularly vindictive towards his Secretary of State, Timothy Pickering, whom he characterized as "envious of every superior," "impatient of obscurity," and deceptive "under the simple appearance of a bald head and straight hair." In most of these cases there was, to be sure, provocation enough. Hamilton had intrigued against him more than once in an underhanded and unpardonable way and as for Mr. Pickering he was well-nigh impossible. John T. Morse refers to him as "the stiff-backed and opinionated old Puritan, full of fight and immutable in the conviction of his own righteousness."

John Adams's was a strangely compounded

character. One of his biographers speaks of him as the "blunt and irascible old John Adams." He was all of this and a good deal more. Combined with statesmanship of the highest order and an unsurpassed personal integrity we find the most glaring and even ridiculous defects of character. He was vain and conceited to a most absurd degree—a fact which he was shrewd enough to recognize and honest enough to admit. "Vanity, I am sensible," he said, "is my cardinal vice and cardinal folly." Intimately associated with his vanity was his jealousy; and strangely enough he was jealous of Washington most of all. In a recurrent mood of churlishness he exclaimed: "Would Washington ever have been commander of the Revolutionary Army or President of the United States if he had not married the rich widow of Mr. Custis?" Again in speaking of the battle of Saratoga he said he was truly grateful "that the glory of turning the tide of arms" was "not immediately due to the Commander-in-Chief. . . . If it had, idolatry and adulation would have been unbounded." When Washington was the central figure of interest at the inauguration of Adams, the latter was consumed

with jealousy and again let fall some foolish and childish expressions; and in the early morning of March 4, 1801, he drove quietly out of the city of Washington in order that he might not be compelled to witness the triumph of Jefferson, his successful adversary, and to extend to him the customary greeting.

However, in spite of the fact that Adams was at times impetuous, hot-headed, vain, conceited, sensitive, dogmatic, combative, and opinionated, he was at the same time a true patriot and a statesman of high order. The storms of his passion, though sometimes violent, were not of long duration, and never served to obscure his vision for any considerable length of time. His indignation, too, was usually a righteous one. He was energetic, sensible, and practical, and so methodical in his business affairs that Franklin seemed to him to be lazy on account of the latter's apparent lack of all method. In speech he was direct, frank, and refreshingly outspoken. Never ingenuous, always clear and incisive in his utterances, there was no mistaking his attitude. There was no Machiavellianism, no trimming, no playing to the galleries, and no attempt at carrying water on both

shoulders. His writings were equally crisp, pungent, and forceful. There was much truth in his honest commentary upon the religion of his day. "Where," said he, "do we find a precept in the gospel requiring ecclesiastical synods, convocations, councils, decrees, creeds, confessions, oaths, subscriptions, and whole cart-loads of other trumpery that we find religion encumbered with in these days?"

In politics he was equally honest and direct, and was moreover usually correct in his attitude, as subsequent events have shown. As a foreign minister he was dignified, industrious and effective. As a member of the Continental Congress he was a hard-fisted, rough-and-ready fighter for what seemed to him to be right.

As a lawyer he was equally courageous. In 1770 he was asked to defend Captain Preston who had charge of the British soldiers in the so-called Boston Massacre. With a keen sense of equity and a high sense of professional duty he accepted the task because he felt that in an Anglo-Saxon court of justice every man should have a fair and an impartial trial with the benefit of counsel for his defense. He undertook the defense and secured the acquittal of

Preston, although he well knew the popular clamor which his course would arouse. He never wavered in his view of the moral aspects of this engagement. A few years later he said: "It was one of the most gallant, manly, and disinterested actions of my whole life, and one of the best pieces of service I ever rendered to my country." Charles Francis Adams concurred in this view when he said that he regarded the participation in this trial "as constituting one of the four great moral trials and triumphs marking his grandfather's career."

When the Declaration of Independence was under discussion in Congress Adams was the foremost figure on the floor. Jefferson in gratitude and admiration called him the "Colossus of that debate," and Stockton saw in him the "Atlas of Independence." He did strike telling blows and did it, for the most part, unconsciously. As John T. Morse has remarked: "His intense earnestness, his familiarity with every possible argument, compelled him to be magnificently eloquent."

The principal event of his administration was the trouble with France, popularly known as the X. Y. Z. Affair. In this matter also he proved



himself to be a courageous, patriotic, and far-sighted man. He represented the spirit of the nation and of the times when he wrote, after the shameful treatment of the American envoys in France, "I will never send another Minister to France without assurance that he will be received, respected, and honored, as the representative of a great, free, independent, and powerful nation." Fifteen years later, still convinced that his attitude towards France in this instance was the correct one, he wrote to a friend that he wished no other inscription upon his tombstone than this: "Here lies John Adams who took upon himself the responsibility of peace with France in the year 1800." Those best competent to judge now agree that President Adams "acted boldly, honestly, and wisely, and for the welfare of the country in a very critical period."

It is both interesting and pleasant to note that in the evening of his life the rancor and asperity of the more active days had been greatly softened. He and Jefferson, both in retirement, were again on the best of terms. At the age of ninety-one, when the mists began to gather and Adams knew that his end was

near, he remarked in quiet resignation to those about him: "Thomas Jefferson still lives." He did not know that Jefferson had passed away a few hours before. Strangely enough, Adams and Jefferson both died on July 4, 1826—the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. "The two aged men," says Col. Higginson, "floated, like two ships becalmed at nightfall, that drift together into port and cast anchor side by side."

In Thomas Jefferson a far abler man than his predecessor came to the presidential office. Jefferson must be accounted, I think, one of the six greatest men in the history of the public life of the United States. He was a well developed, well rounded, and symmetrical character. He showed a marked ability, not in one special line, but in several different and widely separated directions. No other American, with the exception of the many-sided Franklin, gave evidence of such versatility. He was a successful diplomat, a fairly strong executive, a leader in educational affairs, a close student of science, literature, and religion, an originator and promoter of improved scientific methods in agriculture, and the most adroit and successful



political leader that the United States has yet produced. In addition to this he was a good mathematician, a ready and forceful writer, and a violinist of no mean order.

Thomas Jefferson was descended from a substantial Welsh family which had settled in Virginia before the *Mayflower* brought the Pilgrim Fathers to New England. He was the third child in a family of ten. His father was Peter Jefferson, a man of superb physique and vigorous mentality. The Jeffersons were well-to-do and lived on a farm of 1900 acres tilled by 30 slaves. The young Thomas was graduated in due time from William and Mary College; he then studied law and devoted himself successfully to farming and to the practice of his profession until called into public life. At the age of 29, he married Martha, the daughter of John Wayles, a lawyer who enjoyed an extensive and lucrative practice at the Williamsburg bar. A year later Wayles died and left his daughter 4000 acres of land and 135 slaves. The finances of the Jefferson family were now in a very prosperous condition, as the landed estate, even before this inheritance was obtained, yielded an income of about \$2,000 per

year. In addition to this, Jefferson's fees from his law practice amounted to about \$3,000—thus making a very comfortable income for a family in Virginia in those days. Although never a very thrifty business manager, Jefferson soon became one of the leading men of the State. His family, however, was not admitted to the exclusive social set of the Old Dominion until after he had arisen to fame. Although we hear a great deal at a later time of the brilliant social life at Mount Vernon, Monticello and Montpelier, it is nevertheless true, that neither the Washington, Jefferson, or Madison family was a member of the select social coterie of Virginia families until after their chief representatives had arisen to high office.

In temperament Jefferson was a striking contrast to John Adams. He was more human and normal. He was also more conciliatory and but little inclined to nurse his hatred for other men. He did have at one time a very profound dislike for "Monocrats," New England clergymen, and Federal judges but was not inclined, as Adams was, to make unseemly exhibitions of his antipathy. Mark Twain once remarked, "If a man is a pessimist before he is forty-eight he

knows too much. If he is an optimist after he is forty-eight he knows too little." Jefferson ran counter to this rule and presented "the unusual spectacle of one who grew more optimistic with increasing years."

In personal appearance Jefferson was rather impressive but by no means a handsome man. He was six feet two and one half inches tall and muscular as well. When he entered college at seventeen he was described as "tall, raw-boned, freckled, and sandy-haired, with large feet and hands, thick wrists, and prominent cheek bones and chin." His comrades described him as "a fresh, healthy-looking youth, very erect, agile, and strong, with something of rusticity in his air and demeanor." In early manhood, and more particularly in later life, he improved very markedly in personal appearance, although, unlike Washington, he was never very fastidious about his clothing. He often shocked European ministers, and apparently took great delight in doing so, by appearing in his tattered dressing gown and with his slippers down at the heel.

Although the accounts which have come down to us regarding the so-called "Jeffersonian simplicity" have, no doubt, been somewhat exag-

gerated, it is true that Jefferson cared little for ceremony, either in public or private life, and this fact commended him strongly to the masses of the people. John Fiske has told us that "the American people took Jefferson into their hearts as they have never taken any other statesman until Lincoln in these latter days." While Andrew Jackson might well be classed with Jefferson and Lincoln as a popular idol, it is undoubtedly true that Jefferson had a hold upon the affections of the people never excelled by any other public man in the United States. When he was elected President the bells rang and the cannons boomed and pandemonium reigned supreme. There was jubilation in every part of the United States except in some sections of New England; and even there his praises were not entirely unsung, as the newspapers of the time tell us that the denizens of the Hartford frog ponds croaked in unison for "the man of the people, the man of the people."

Jefferson's sway was a gentle one. He wielded no big stick. He was a leader, not a driver of men. When President, if he wished an Act passed by Congress, he would perhaps

express himself to that effect in casual conversation with some member of that body. There might be no request, no argument, and no agreement; but in all probability the legislator would hurry off to Congress and quietly make known the wishes of the chief executive, and forthwith the thing was done.

The principles and the character of Jefferson have been the subject of violent and, in some cases, of needless controversy. It seems to me to be regrettable that so many of the biographers of Hamilton and Jefferson should think it necessary to pull down the one in order to exalt the other. It should be accounted a very fortunate circumstance that two such men as Hamilton and Jefferson lived in the formative period of the Republic. They represented, it is true, opposite poles of political thought, always opposing and never pulling in the same direction. While members of Washington's cabinet, they faced each other, as Jefferson said, "like two fighting cocks in a pit." Each, however, was a valuable corrective upon the other; and each supplemented the labors of his adversary. Hamilton was Anglican, and Jefferson Latin in his sympathies. Hamilton was an

aristocrat and exalted the so-called "upper classes;" Jefferson was a democrat and had an abiding faith in the masses. Hamilton was a liberal constructionist and a centralizer of power, while Jefferson was a decentralizer and a strict constructionist. Hamilton was a nationalist and Jefferson an ardent advocate of "states rights." In the course of events neither had his way to the exclusion of the other, but the line of development of the government has been, in a general way, the resultant between these two powerful forces.

Jefferson's public service was unselfish and free from any mercenary tinge. When he entered public life as a young man he made a resolution "never to engage, while in public office, in any kind of enterprise, nor to wear any other character than that of a farmer." He kept the faith. In fact he neglected his prudential affairs to such an extent that when he retired from the presidency on the 4th of March, 1809, after an almost continuous public service of forty-four years, he feared that his creditors might not permit him to leave the Capital without arrest. Unlike Washington, he was not thrifty in business affairs. He was



also generous and accommodating to a fault. Even late in life, after he had weathered many financial storms, he indorsed a \$20,000 note for a friend and was compelled to pay it; yet with all of his embarrassments the "Sage of Monticello" wielded, from his rustic retreat, a mildly despotic sway over the Republican party in particular and the whole people in general. There he lies buried, and the shaft over his grave bears an inscription written by Jefferson himself: "Here was buried Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of American Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, and Father of the University of Virginia."

Although Jefferson retired from public life in 1809, he and his principles dominated the government for sixteen years longer. Madison and Monroe, whom the newspapers of the time facetiously called James the First and James the Second, were his loyal personal and political friends and when in need of advice, they invariably consulted the "Oracle of Monticello."

James Madison, another member of a substantial Virginia family and an intimate personal and political friend of Thomas Jefferson,

succeeded the latter in the presidential office in 1809. Frail in body but powerful in mind, he had served his State and Nation well before becoming Secretary of State in the Jefferson administration. He was graduated at 21 from Princeton University—then the College of New Jersey—in 1772 and had returned to his Alma Mater for an additional year of work in Hebrew. He was at this time of a distinctly religious and philosophical turn of mind and it is probable that he seriously considered the ministry as his life work. If so, he was soon diverted and applied himself industriously to the study of law. He never wholly lost his interest in religious matters, however, and always set his face firmly against that bigotry and intolerance in religion which were all too prevalent in Virginia in his time.

After having had at least one unsuccessful love affair, this prim little man who always appeared prematurely old, was married at the age of 43 to Mrs. Dolly Payne Todd, a beautiful and vivacious widow of 26. The name of “Dolly Madison” is well known in the social annals of the White House. She was apparently a woman of ability, grace and rare charm. She



exercised a tactful social leadership in Washington and her "extraordinary beauty" and "rare accomplishments" are frequently referred to by the writers of the time. About the time of his marriage, Madison established his beautiful country home, "Montpelier," and there and in Washington, the home life of the Madisons was an ideal one for more than 40 years.

Madison, like Jefferson, was destined to give his best efforts to the public service rather than to the practice of law. This service was sound and substantial rather than brilliant or picturesque. It was an eminently constructive service. As a matter of fact, we may look upon Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Jefferson, Franklin and John Marshall as the six vital men in the formative period of the Republic. They were the founders of the American Union. In this group, Madison was "the modest scholar and the profound thinker." "Unlike his friend Jefferson, who could hardly speak in public, Madison was one of the most formidable parliamentary debaters that ever lived. Without a particle of eloquence or what is called personal magnetism, with a dry style and a mild,

unimpassioned delivery, he would nevertheless have been a fair match for Charles Fox or the younger Pitt. His vast knowledge was always at command, his ideas were always clear and his grasp of the situation perfect and although he was so modest that the color came and went upon his cheeks as upon a young girl's, he was never flurried or thrown off his guard. He represented pure intelligence, which is doubtless one reason why his popular fame has not been equal to his merit. There is nothing especially picturesque about pure intelligence, but it is a great power nevertheless."<sup>1</sup>

Madison will be remembered as a scholar rather than as an executive. No man of his time prepared himself so thoroughly and so conscientiously for a public career. While a student at Princeton, although frail in body, he gave himself unreservedly to his task, and one of his biographers tells us that he succeeded in carrying the studies of the junior and senior classes in a single year. In his knowledge of history, political science, and constitutional law, he was without a peer among the men of his day; and no one of them, with the single exception of

<sup>1</sup> John Fiske, *Essays*, Volume I, pp. 204-5.

Hamilton, deserves to be mentioned with him in this respect. As a thinker he was both profound and constructive, and is seen at his best in the Constitutional Convention. He was the most useful man in that illustrious body, and has been deservedly called the "Father of the Constitution."

In addition to taking a leading part in the constructive work of the Constitutional Convention, Madison became the historiographer of that body. He felt that the convention was a notable body of men and was destined to do a work of unusual importance. He had also encountered great difficulty in ascertaining the fundamental facts about federal government, ancient and modern. He accordingly made up his mind to take copious notes on the proceedings and debates of the Convention and thus preserve for posterity a faithful record of the acts and sentiments of that great body.

He preëmpted a front seat in the convention hall and according to his own testimony was present every day and almost every hour while the Convention was in session. He took rapid notes, making use of a system of shorthand of his own invention, and often sat up far into the

night making a clean copy of his manuscript. These papers, usually called *Madison's Journal*, are the most important and the only complete source of information in regard to the making of the Constitution of the United States. Inasmuch as certain parts of the contents of this *Journal* were not particularly complimentary to individual members of the Convention, Madison decided that it should not be published while any of the members of that body were living. Strangely enough, Madison, himself, though not the youngest, was the last of that memorable body of men to pass away. He died at Montpelier in 1836 at the age of 85 and the *Journal* was published soon after by the government of the United States.

In political information and in ethical ideals his standards were equally high. On one occasion, when a candidate for the Virginia legislature, he came to the conclusion, as he said, that more chaste methods of electioneering should be resorted to. He therefore refused to make a personal canvass or to purchase drinkables to assuage the election thirst. This startling and intolerable innovation was promptly rebuked by his decisive defeat.

In debate Madison was quiet and conciliatory but yet effective. He never addressed any audience, large or small, friendly or unfriendly, without fear and trembling. He was described as "modest, quiet, and reserved in manner, small in stature, neat and refined, courteous and amiable." In temperament he was quite unlike Gouverneur Morris, who said that he never experienced the slightest nervousness or concern when facing any audience whatever. He also differed from his old companion in arms, James Wilson of Pennsylvania, who apparently took a rare delight in smashing down the defenses of his adversary in debate with his sledge-hammer blows. He also differed from Hamilton, whose arguments were of the overmastering, dominating, and compelling kind. And yet in some instances he was more effective than any of his three great colleagues. There is an old adage which says: "Mediocrity which forbears will accomplish more than a genius which irritates." Madison was far above mediocrity and knew how and when to forbear.

As an executive, however, Madison does not shine so brilliantly. The hand that wields the

pen with effect is not always the best fitted to grasp the helm. The temperament of the cloister recoils at sight of the rough-and-tumble methods of party strife. Madison was too sensitive and deferential, not positive and decisive enough, to make an efficient executive. As a result, he was pushed aside by men more determined than himself. The one great event of his administration was the War of 1812, and Madison, as a man of peace, held out against this contest as long as he could. He was finally compelled to yield, much against his better judgment, by Clay, Calhoun, and the other "War Hawks" of the time. Great Britain richly deserved a declaration of war—and France, too, for that matter—but the wise and conservative opinion in the United States in 1812 was in favor of a pacific policy with further attempts at arbitration. If James Madison had had the disposition of a Grover Cleveland the War of 1812 would probably never have taken place.

James Monroe, a member of another substantial Virginia family, succeeded to the presidency in 1817. He was a native of Westmoreland county and was descended from a Scotch Cavalier family which came to Virginia about 1650.



His particular locality was rich in famous men and came to be known as "The Athens of Virginia." It was the home of Washington and Madison as well as of Richard Henry Lee and of his famous cousin, "Light Horse Harry" Lee, the father of Robert E. Lee, Confederate commander in the Civil War. The old home of the Marshall family was also in the same locality.

As a stripling, James Monroe entered William and Mary College, said to have been at that time the richest institution of learning in North America. It had an annual income of \$20,000. He could not have remained in college very long, however, as at the outbreak of the Revolution "two tall and gallant youths" cast their books aside and fought valiantly for the independence of the colonies. One of these youths was James Monroe and the other, his classmate, John Marshall. Monroe was 18 years of age when he entered the service and Marshall about 20.

Monroe was always an intimate personal friend of Thomas Jefferson and this fact was a great assistance to him in his political advancement. He was a lawyer but did not seem to

have any great interest in his profession. Public life attracted him. In fact he gave so much time to the public service that he had little opportunity for the serious or consecutive practice of law.

Monroe was seven years younger than Madison and unlike him in almost every respect. He was six feet tall, broad, square-shouldered and impressive in personal appearance. He was a man of rugged physique, raw-boned and by no means handsome. He was, however, a man of great physical strength and superb endurance. At one time during the War of 1812, Monroe had charge for a short period of three cabinet departments—State, Treasury and War—and for a period of ten days and nights he did not go to bed or remove his clothing and “was in the saddle the greater part of the time.”

Although there was a quiet dignity about his bearing, Monroe did not impress his contemporaries as a particularly cultured man. He was awkward and diffident and without grace either in manner or appearance. In his old age he was especially modest and sensitive and was scrupulously careful to conduct himself in a manner befitting the dignity of an ex-President



of the United States. He thought it unseemly, for example, for a man who had held this high office to connect himself in any way with party politics. Although modest and sensitive, however, he was free from that vanity and envy which constituted the besetting sin of John Adams.

Like Jefferson, Monroe was never particularly effective as a public speaker. He was also a labored writer and his state papers are much inferior to those of Madison. Aside from the matter of expression, Monroe was not as logical or level-headed as his predecessor and these characteristics were, of course, reflected in his writings. He was fond of history and although he wrote with difficulty he aspired to authorship. He wrote a small book which he called *A Comparison of the American Republic with the Republics of Greece and Rome*. When the manuscript was completed he submitted it to Judge Hay and asked for his estimate of it. The estimate came in the laconic sentence, "I think your time could have been better employed."

Monroe was nearly 59 years of age when he became President and had been prominent in public life for many years prior to that time.

He was not a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 but was chosen in the following year, at the age of 30, to sit in the convention of his own State which ratified the Constitution after a memorable struggle. Monroe opposed the ratification very strenuously. He was a States-rights man and opposed on principle to centralization in government. He, with George Mason and Patrick Henry contended in the Convention with Madison, John Marshall and Edmund Randolph. He was also at a later time a United States Senator, an Envoy to France, and Governor of his native State, as well as a prominent member of President Madison's cabinet. In 1803, he had assisted Robert R. Livingston in the purchase of Louisiana and prior to that time had served as minister to France. His mission was a failure and he wrote a book of five hundred pages in a futile effort to justify his conduct. It was clearly a case of protesting too much.

Monroe lived in retirement in Virginia and New York for six years after leaving the presidential office and died on the 4th of July, 1831. On April 28, 1858, the one hundredth anniversary of his birth, his ashes were carried under

escort to Richmond, Virginia, and there re-interred in Hollywood Cemetery.

The estimate of Dr. Daniel C. Gilman, the first President of Johns Hopkins University and also one of the biographers of Monroe, is interesting in this connection. "On reviewing all that I have been able to read in print and in manuscript, and all I have been able to gather from the writings of others," he remarks, "the conclusion is forced on me that Monroe is not adequately appreciated by his countrymen. He has certainly been insufficiently known, because no collection has been made of his numerous memoirs, letters, dispatches, and messages. He has suffered also by comparison with four or five illustrious men, his seniors in years and his superiors in genius, who were chiefly instrumental in establishing this government on its firm basis. He was not the equal of Washington in prudence, of Marshall in wisdom, of Hamilton in constructive power, of Jefferson in genius for politics, of Madison in persistent ability to think out an idea and to persuade others of its importance. He was in early life enthusiastic to rashness, he was a devoted adherent of partisan views, he was

sometimes despondent and sometimes irascible; but as he grew older his judgment was disciplined, his self-control became secure, his patriotism overbalanced the considerations of party. Political opponents rarely assailed the purity of his motives or the honesty of his conduct. He was a very good civil service reformer, firmly set against appointments to office for any unworthy reason. He was never exposed to the charge of nepotism, and in the choice of officers to be appointed he carefully avoided the recognition of family and friendly ties. His hands were never stained with pelf. He grew poor in the public service, because he neglected his private affairs and incurred large outlays in the discharge of official duties under circumstances which demanded liberal expenditure. He was extremely reticent as to his religious sentiments, at least in all that he wrote. Allusions to his belief are rarely if ever to be met with in his correspondence. He was a faithful husband, father, master, neighbor, friend. He was industrious, serious, temperate, domestic, affectionate. He carried with him to the end of his life the good-will and respect both of his seniors and juniors. Many of those who

worked with him, besides those already quoted, have left on record their appreciation of his abilities and their esteem for his character.”<sup>1</sup>

Monroe, then, although a man of somewhat less magnitude than his predecessor, was, nevertheless, a useful and successful President. While Minister to France he had been recalled by President Washington on account of an ostentatious and silly display of affection for that country; and he has always been given too much credit for his modest part in the so-called “Monroe Doctrine”; yet no man did so much as he to bring about that period commonly known as “The Era of Good Feeling.” Monroe was a man of impressive appearance and soldierly bearing, and when he made his two extended trips, the one through the North and the other through the South, delivering cordial and sensible addresses wherever he went, he did a great deal towards breaking down that spirit of sectionalism and party strife which was then growing strong in the United States.

Monroe's successor is one of the lofty peaks in the presidential range. John Quincy Adams was probably the greatest man in the presi-

<sup>1</sup> *James Monroe*, pp 213-15.

dential office from Washington to Lincoln with the single exception of Thomas Jefferson. He was not the most influential man of the period—Andrew Jackson was that; neither was he the most capable and successful President; but, all things considered, John Quincy Adams must be accounted, I think, the greatest man to occupy the President's chair for half a century.

John Quincy Adams was a son of the "blunt and irascible old John Adams," the second President of the United States. It would be difficult to find a family in American history which has rendered a more effective or a more disinterested service to the country than the Adams family of Massachusetts—and the greatest of this family was John Quincy. He was born in the year following the repeal of the Stamp Act—in the midst of the Revolutionary agitation; and at the age of seven, in company with his mother, he climbed a high hill near his home to listen to the guns at Bunker Hill and to gaze in awe upon the flames of Charlestown. At nine he upbraided himself in a letter because he had just entered the third volume of Smollett, when, according to his schedule he should have been half through the book. "My



thoughts," he said, in a deprecatory way, "have apparently been running after birds' eggs, play and trifles."

Adams had the best of opportunities for culture and intellectual development. He traveled with his father in Europe, studied at the University of Leyden and was later graduated from Harvard College. He soon became distinguished as a lawyer and statesman and at one time or another he filled with distinction almost all of the great offices of the United States. While Secretary of State under Monroe he became the principal author and most ardent advocate of what later became known as the "Monroe Doctrine." He was an excellent writer in both prose and verse and held a professorship in Harvard College for three years. He was a "knight without fear and without reproach," and it is safe to say that no man in America, in 1825, possessed in an equal degree the characteristics of an ideal President; and yet his administration was, in some respects, a disappointment, and, for reasons which we cannot now analyze, he was denied the indorsement of a second term.

In discussing the passing of Adams from the

presidency, Dr. Von Holst remarks rather gloomily: "In the person of Adams, the last statesman who was to occupy it for a long time left the White House." He was 61 years of age at the time and was what John T. Morse calls "that melancholy product of the American governmental system—an ex-President." Adams, however, declined to be a "melancholy product" and continued to serve his country for a score of years. Soon after retiring from the presidency, Adams was elected a member of the House of Representatives from Massachusetts. He held this position until the time of his death, seventeen years later, and became known as "The Old Man Eloquent," and as an able and fearless champion of the "right of petition." He was stricken at his post of duty while attending a session of the House on February 21, 1848. A bronze star embedded in the floor of the Capitol building marks the exact spot. There, as his biographer in the *American Statesmen Series* has remarked, "the stern old fighter lay dying almost on the very field of so many battles and in the very tracks in which he had so often stood erect and unconquerable, taking and dealing so many mighty blows."



Two days later he passed away, one of the most cruelly maligned men in American history.

During these seventeen years in the House of Representatives Adams exhibited a remarkable fidelity to duty. He was usually present at his post, he was tireless in committee work and always voted in an intelligent and well-informed manner. It was his marvelous power of public speaking, however, that was his distinguishing trait in those years. "Living in the age of oratory," says John T. Morse, "he earned the name of 'the old man eloquent.' Yet he was not an orator in the sense in which Webster, Clay, and Calhoun were orators. He was not a rhetorician; he had neither grace of manner nor a fine presence, neither an imposing delivery, nor even pleasing tones. On the contrary, he was exceptionally lacking in all these qualities. He was short, rotund, and bald; about the time when he entered Congress, complaints became frequent in his Diary of weak and inflamed eyes, and soon these organs became so rheumy that the water would trickle down his cheeks; a shaking of the hand grew upon him to such an extent that in time he had to use artificial assistance to steady it for writing; his voice was high,

shrill, liable to break, piercing enough to make itself heard, but not agreeable. This hardly seems the picture of an orator; nor was it to any charm of elocution that he owed his influence, but rather to the fact that men soon learned that what he said was always well worth hearing. . . . When invective fell around him in showers, he screamed back his retaliation with untiring rapidity and marvellous dexterity of aim. No odds could appal him. With his back set firm against a solid moral principle, it was his joy to strike out at a multitude of foes. They lost their heads as well as their tempers, but in the extremest moments of excitement and anger Mr. Adams's brain seemed to work with machine-like coolness and accuracy. With flushed face, streaming eyes, animated gesticulation, and cracking voice, he always retained perfect mastery of all his intellectual faculties. He thus became a terrible antagonist, whom all feared, yet fearing could not refrain from attacking, so bitterly and incessantly did he choose to exert his wonderful power of exasperation. Few men could throw an opponent into wild blind fury with such speed and certainty as he could; and he does not conceal the malicious

gratification which such feats brought to him. A leader of such fighting capacity, so courageous, with such a magazine of experience and information, and with a character so irreproachable, could have won brilliant victories in public life at the head of even a small band of devoted followers. But Mr. Adams never had and apparently never wanted followers. Other prominent public men were brought not only into collision but into comparison with their contemporaries. But Mr. Adams's individuality was so strong that he can be compared with no one. It was not an individuality of genius nor to any remarkable extent of mental qualities; but rather an individuality of character. To this fact is probably to be attributed his peculiar solitariness."<sup>1</sup>

John Fiske also refers to Adams's skill and power in debate and to the vituperative character of his vocabulary. "As a parliamentary debater," says Fiske, "he has had few if any superiors; in knowledge and dexterity there was no one in the house who could be compared with him; he was always master of himself, even at the white heat of anger to which he often

<sup>1</sup> *John Quincy Adams*, pp. 228-232.

rose; he was terrible in invective, matchless at repartee, and insensible to fear. A single-handed fight against all slave-holders in the house was something upon which he was always ready to enter, and he usually came off with the last word. Though the vituperative vocabulary of the English language seemed inadequate to express the hatred and loathing with which the pro-slavery party regarded him, though he was more than once threatened with assassination, nevertheless his dauntless bearing and boundless resources compelled the respect of his bitterest opponents, and members from the south, with true chivalry, sometimes confessed it."

Adams certainly had an "ever-ready and merciless tongue." He referred to John Randolph of Roanoke on one occasion as a "frequenter of gin lane and beer alley," and on another occasion he referred to the falsehoods which "the skunks of party slander . . . have been . . . squirting around the House of Representatives, thence to issue and perfume the atmosphere of the Union." Adams was honest, blunt, and tactless and could stick pins into people in a very matter-of-fact and unimpassioned

way. He was always ready to hew to the line and let the chips fall where they would. It did not accord, for example, with his idea of the fitness of things when Harvard College proposed to confer the degree of Doctor of Laws upon Andrew Jackson. He expressed himself pointedly at the time and took pleasure in referring to the "hero of New Orleans" as "Doctor Andrew Jackson." "As myself an affectionate child of our Alma Mater," he said, "I would not be present to witness her disgrace in conferring the highest literary honors upon a barbarian who could not write a sentence of grammar and hardly could spell his own name." Adams was regular in church attendance and read three chapters of the Bible every day but he was never "plenteous in mercy" and many of his phrases were strikingly unbiblical. The soft answer, for example, had no place in his rhetorical arsenal. In spite of his barbed tongue, however, he won, through his honesty and ability, the respect of his contemporaries. A striking evidence of this fact was seen on one occasion in the House of Representatives. He had been stricken by paralysis in the streets of Boston in November, 1846. Three months later, he returned to

Washington. When he entered the House, the members, many of whom had felt the sting of his whip-lash rhetoric, stood up in their places as a mark of respect while the doughty old warrior was being escorted to his seat by a committee appointed for that purpose.

Personally, Adams was not a particularly attractive or magnetic man. In this respect he resembled somewhat the late Benjamin Harrison, who, in the political slang of the day, was frequently termed "a pretty cold proposition." He was intellectual rather than emotional, and his temperament was far removed from that of the popular idol. Being "a Puritan of the sternest and most uncompromising sort, who seemed to take a grim enjoyment in the performance of duty, especially when disagreeable," he had a splendid "talent for making enemies." No man ever cared less for popular favor, if that favor had to be gained by truckling to the whims of the multitude. When Edward Everett asked him on one occasion if he intended to do nothing at all to bring about his election to the presidency of the United States, his simple reply was: "Absolutely nothing." At close range such simple honesty as this often

appears to be stupidity, or at best a species of stubbornness coupled with a haughty reserve. You cannot make a reigning popular favorite out of an honest and outspoken statesman. He must bide his time. So it was with Adams. In these latter days, however, John Quincy Adams is coming into his own. He is coming to be recognized as one of the greatest of American statesmen. In ability and acquirements, in honesty of purpose, broad humanity and high ideals, John Quincy Adams was not excelled by any public man of his day; and I say this fully conscious of the fact that the day of Adams was also the day of Andrew Jackson, of Henry Clay, of John C. Calhoun, and of Daniel Webster.





FROM JACKSON TO LINCOLN



## CHAPTER II

### FROM JACKSON TO LINCOLN

BETWEEN Jackson and Lincoln the presidential curve reaches its lowest point. This period of twenty-four years constitutes a long, barren, and monotonous stretch in the course of which the presidency came perilously near to the "slough of despond." During this period, says Viscount Bryce, "from Jackson to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the Presidents were either mere politicians, such as Van Buren, Polk, or Buchanan, or else successful soldiers, such as Harrison or Taylor, whom their party found useful as figure-heads. They were intellectual pigmies beside the real leaders of that generation—Clay, Calhoun, and Webster." "Jackson himself," he adds, "was something of both politician and soldier, a strong character, but a narrow and uncultivated intellect."

This judgment, while true in the main, is, like most generalizations, too sweeping and indis-

criminating to be wholly just. Andrew Jackson, for instance, was vastly more than a soldier-politician. He was the most influential man in American politics from the time of Jefferson to the opening of the Civil War. He dominated public affairs during his own and Van Buren's administration, and after his retirement to the "Hermitage," King Andrew, as the papers of the time facetiously called him, continued his benevolent reign. He was, as Viscount Bryce says, particularly in the early part of his career, a narrow and uncultivated intellect. But this is only one side of the shield. He was a man of impulse, but his impulses were, for the most part, sound. He was also a strong leader of tremendous motive power and bold initiative, absolutely honest and with the courage of his convictions. Andrew Jackson presented a figure little less than heroic when on Jefferson's birthday in 1830, he arose in his place at the banqueting table and, in an atmosphere surcharged with the spirit of nullification, pronounced his famous toast: "The Federal Union: It must be Preserved." Unconsciously he was paving the way for the great work of Lincoln a generation later. If he had done nothing else

his existence would have been abundantly justified.

Jackson was a good representative of that rugged and rigid Scotch-Irish element which came to the uplands of the Carolinas about the middle of the eighteenth century. His father, also named Andrew, came to this locality from the northern coast of Ireland in 1765, bringing with him his wife and two sons. The young Andrew, who afterwards became President of the United States, was born in 1767, a few days after his father's death. Even at the present time there is no agreement as to the exact location of his birth-place. It was near the boundary line separating the two Carolinas and some contend that it was in South Carolina and others in North. Jackson, himself, however, in at least three official documents speaks of himself as a native of South Carolina.

The schools of his locality were poor and scarce. Even if they had been better and more numerous it is not at all likely that the young Andrew would have profited much by them. He had none of the traits or tendencies of the scholar. He was not book-minded. He was a youth of unbounded and restless activity. He

had a fiery and ungovernable—certainly an ungoverned—temper and soon drifted into military service where his impetuosity was his characteristic trait. From the army to politics was an easy and obvious transition in those days and Jackson soon became a popular idol in civil as well as military life. At various intervals in his career he also gave some attention to saddlery, to farming, and to law. At 14, he was left alone in the world to fight his way up. At 17, he abandoned the saddlery trade and took up the study of law. He never became much of a lawyer, however; in the first place he never applied himself seriously to the study of his profession and in the second place he was not legally or judicially minded. His talents lay in another direction. He was, however, a successful farmer and plantation master and was kind and considerate to those under his control. His financial credit was good and a note bearing his name was always accepted.

In politics Jackson was impulsive rather than judicial. Jefferson said to Webster in 1824, that he had often while presiding over the Senate seen Jackson get up in his place to speak and “then choke with rage so that he

could not utter a word." Any proposition which did not commend itself to him as honest and straight-forward in every respect was thoroughly repellent. His instincts were fundamentally honest, but his judgment was often at fault. He never vacillated, however, and the sobriquet of "Old Hickory," which he earned in the War of 1812, was characteristic of his rigidity in civil as well as in military life.

This kind of temperament does not commend itself as an ideal one for a man in a high executive position, and, as a matter of fact, it was far from being so. Jackson himself realized as much at one time. When his friends first broached the matter of the presidency, he scouted the idea. "Do they suppose," said he with some warmth, "that I am such a d—d fool as to think myself fit for President of the United States? No, sir. I know what I am fit for. I can command a body of men in a rough way but I am not fit to be President." Clay was of the same opinion. In speaking of Jackson he remarked significantly that a military hero was not a fit person to be President of the United States. This is perhaps the only point upon which Jackson and Clay agreed and the agree-

ment, even in this case, was quite unintentional.

Another element of weakness in the make-up of Jackson was his inclination to believe everything of a derogatory character that anyone might say of Adams. The worst was none too bad. Politicians said that Adams had made a corrupt bargain with Clay in 1824 involving the presidency and the secretaryship of State; they said that Adams was a monarchist and an aristocrat; that he had written a poem reflecting on the character of Jefferson; that his wife was an English woman; that he had made a subscription to a turn-pike road and had refused to pay it; that he was wealthy; that he was in debt; that he was a chronic office-seeker; that he had purchased a billiard table for the White House with public money—these and a score of similar charges found lodgment in Jackson's receptive mind. But notwithstanding these regrettable defects of character, Jackson rendered a splendid service to the American Republic.

Jackson stands as the personification of a new era in the history of the United States. The colonial days had passed and the national period was in reality just beginning. The older



statesmen of the constitutional period had now, for the most part, passed off the scene. Washington, Hamilton, John Adams, and Jefferson were dead and Madison and Monroe were in retirement. A new set of statesmen had arisen to take their places and the "Spoils System" in politics was being introduced. A new era in industry was also just dawning. This was the time of the beginning of the railroad, of ocean navigation, of the screw-propeller, of the McCormick harvester, of the use of anthracite coal and friction matches,—the day of the modern daily paper, of the founding of great cities, of immigration, and of the Abolitionists and other reformers. It was a day of crudeness, coarseness, and even of vulgarity; but at the same time a day of the most intense energy. In letters also the new republic was finding itself. Irving, Cooper and Bryant were laying the foundations of American literature. Last, and in some respects most important of all, the democracy of the West was about to triumph over the aristocracy of the East. Up to this time every President had been the product of the culture and refinement of the Atlantic seaboard; and the new West, rising like a giant in

the Mississippi and Ohio valleys, had never been recognized. Then as now there were many wise men in the East who were not tall enough to look over the Alleghany Mountains and recognize the possibilities of the great western country. In the election of Jackson the common people felt that they had come into their own. Jackson, more than any other man, represented the ideals and ambitions of his time. He was as crude and as intense as his age. He himself was a western pioneer. He entered a law office at eighteen and while attempting to scrape up a speaking acquaintance with Blackstone and other legal worthies, with only meager success it must be admitted, he was described as "the most roaring, rollicking, game-cocking, horse-racing, card-playing, mischievous fellow" that the locality had ever known,—which was really saying a good deal, as wild oats was a staple crop in Kentucky and Tennessee in those days. He fought in the Revolution at fourteen and won his spurs against the British at New Orleans in 1815. He was quick and handy with horse-whip and pistol, had killed his man in a duel, and in one instance had pitched his adversary downstairs in a tavern brawl and carried

a bullet for twenty years as a reminder of the episode. The constitutional convention of Tennessee of 1796 had certain rules of order which impress one as being significant. One of them was this: "He that digresseth from the subject to fall on the person of any member shall be suppressed by the speaker." Inasmuch as Jackson was a member of that convention the rule might not have been entirely superfluous. In spite of his impulsiveness and crudeness, however, he was a strong and forceful personality, compelling either loyal friendship or bitter enmity on the part of those with whom he came in contact. When he was inaugurated the so-called plain people came from all parts of the United States to witness the triumph of their great apostle. They were not a silk-stockinged set. A writer of the time has put it on record that they overturned bowls of punch and smashed glasses and climbed with muddy cow-hide boots upon finely upholstered furniture in an effort to obtain a glimpse of their hero. Webster wrote as follows: "To-day we have had the inauguration. A monstrous crowd of people is in the city. I never saw anything like it before. People have come five hundred

miles to see General Jackson and they really seem to think that the country is rescued from some frightful danger." The fears which the people expressed were, for the most part, unfounded; and yet the coming of Jackson with all his faults and crudities was beneficial to the country. Lincoln used to say that the government needs an occasional bath of the people. Jackson administered such a bath in 1829.

The sweeping statement of Viscount Bryce also does scant justice to Martin Van Buren. Van Buren was undoubtedly not one of the great Presidents; neither should he be classed, however, with the "mediocrities" or "accidents" of the White House. He was, as one of his biographers has remarked, "a first-class second-class man." He came to the presidency severely handicapped. Jackson and his opponents had sown the wind, and Van Buren was compelled to reap the whirlwind; and, to continue the breezy metaphor, the "political hurricane" of the campaign of 1840 swept him from the presidential chair. In a word, Van Buren was held responsible for the panic of 1837 and kindred evils. "The country made up its mind that he was a small, selfish, incapable politician,

and it judged him accordingly." It did him an injustice. Many of the catch phrases of the day carried cruel and unjust criticisms. The partisan press and hostile campaign speakers heralded him as "little Van," "the American Talleyrand," "the little Magician," and "the Machiavelli of American politics."

Van Buren is another man who fought his way up from the ranks of the poor and humble to the highest official position in the United States. His father was a Dutch farmer and tavern keeper living in a very modest way at Kinderhook, New York. His early education was meager in quantity and very inferior in quality, but he had a good mind and a serious purpose and availed himself of every means of self-education. As a result he became an eminent lawyer, a convincing debater, and a writer of correct and effective English. He began the study of law at 14 and later became the law partner and intimate personal friend of Benjamin F. Butler in Albany. As a political leader and organizer he had no superior among the men of his time; in fact he had reduced political organization to a fine art. He lacked the tremendous driving power of Jackson but he

infinitely excelled his gruff chief in tact and in the ability to deal with men. His domestic life was happy and above reproach. His one great sorrow was the death of his wife when he was 37 years of age. Loyal to her memory, he never re-married. When nearly four score he died near the place of his birth on his country estate which he had named "Lindenwald." It was here that Irving some years before had put the finishing touches on his *Knickerbocker History of New York*. Even when the shadows began to lengthen, Van Buren's political and personal enemies were relentless in their persecution and he suffered merciless flagellations at the hands of those who hated the whole Jacksonian *regime*. Much of this was undeserved and even now many historical writers are still inclined to look upon Van Buren as a scheming, wire-pulling politician. As a matter of fact he was a very capable man and would have given the country a good administration under more favorable conditions. He was an eminent lawyer, a skillful politician, a refined, polite, and cultured gentleman, and a man of regular, correct, and temperate habits. Mr. Edward M. Shepard's estimate is probably too high. In his life of Van



Buren he says: "If to the highest rank of American presidents be assigned Washington, and if after him in it come Jefferson and perhaps Lincoln . . . the second rank would seem to include Madison, the younger Adams, and Van Buren." I am confident that most critics would strike out the word "perhaps" in connection with Lincoln and that not all would place Van Buren on a level with Madison and John Quincy Adams; yet he was undoubtedly above the average of American Presidents both in ability and in character.

Between Van Buren and Lincoln seven men occupied the presidential chair. Two of these—Harrison and Taylor—owed their preferment to military fame rather than to statesmanlike qualities. Harrison was somewhat experienced in public civil life, but Taylor had been in the army since early manhood and had had no training in governmental affairs. Although nominated by the Whigs, he was in no sense a party man. In fact he had never voted. He had no definite views upon the great questions of the day and was not a little embarrassed when compelled to get some on short notice. Lowell made the most of the ludicrous situation in his *Bige-*

*low Papers.* He represented General Taylor as evading inquiries in regard to his views concerning slavery, the Mexican War, the Wilmot Proviso and other live questions, but as pronouncing with great definiteness and emphasis upon the Bank and other dead issues. The candidate is made to conclude as follows:

“Ez to my princerples, I glory  
In hevin’ nothin’ o’ the sort,  
I ain’t a Wig, I ain’t a Tory,  
I’m just a candidate, in short.”

A well known English literary critic recently remarked: “You are as likely to be born with a silk hat on your head as with a good (literary) taste implanted in your breast.” It is equally true that no man is likely to be born with all of the qualifications of a great executive. A man can scarcely hope to be a successful President of the United States without a reasonable amount of theoretical knowledge and practical experience in governmental affairs.

It has been truly said of General Harrison that “he was not a great man, but he lived in a great time, and had been a leader in great things.” Harrison was a member of an illustrious Virginia family and was born two years



before the Battles of Lexington and Concord. His father was Benjamin Harrison who had long been a leader in his native state. He had joined hands with Patrick Henry and James Monroe in 1788 in opposing the ratification of the Federal Constitution but gave it his enthusiastic support immediately upon its adoption.

The young William Henry was a student at Hampden-Sidney College and entered upon the study of medicine. His professional education was apparently cut short as we find him, at the age of 18, fighting Indians on the frontier. From that time on for many years, his career was intimately connected with Indian affairs. At times he appeared as their master upon the battlefield and again as the defender and protector of their rights and interests. He protected them from the ravages of smallpox and whisky and in many other ways strove to better their condition. His most famous victory over the red man was won in the Battle of Tippecanoe fought seven miles north of the present site of LaFayette, Indiana. After serving with distinction in the War of 1812, in the United States Senate, and as foreign minister, he retired to the seclusion of his country home at

North Bend, near Cincinnati, Ohio. Here he served his neighbors in a modest way as "clerk of the county court and president of the county agricultural society." It was from this rustic retreat that he was called to the presidency of the United States. His previous career would not seem to have constituted a very good preparation for the presidency and he might not have been elected to that position if some one had not discovered that the east end of his house at North Bend was constructed of logs. Instantly the name of this man, with the flavor of the back-woods about it, became connected with log cabins, coon skins, and hard cider and the people began to sing the praises of "Tippecanoe and Tyler too." All this appealed powerfully to the imagination of the period and "old Tip" received 234 electoral votes to 60 for Martin Van Buren. He died of pneumonia—some say that he was worried to death by office seekers—on April 4, 1841, just one month after his inauguration. His term of service was so short that he really made no record in the presidential office. He was, however, a man of sound patriotism and rugged honesty, if not of statesman-like qualities. His impulses were sound and

courageous. When his end was near his mind began to wander and he exclaimed, as if addressing his successor in office: "Sir, I wish you to understand the principles of this government. I desire them carried out. I ask nothing more." John Tyler, the Vice-President, then served as chief magistrate of the nation for a period of three years and eleven months.

Tyler was a Democrat elected on the Whig ticket. He had been nominated with General Harrison in order to attract those Democrats who were out of harmony with the Van Buren administration. When Tyler became President, the Whig members of Congress soon found that he had a mind and a will of his own. Immediately after the Whig victory, General Harrison felt that Mr. Clay was presuming too much and said to him coldly, "You seem to forget, sir, that it is I who am President." Tyler's general attitude might have been similarly expressed. His whole administration was a running fight with Congress in the course of which he vetoed important measures relating to the bank, the tariff and internal improvements. On one occasion (September 9, 1842), he vetoed the Fiscal Corporation Bill after having apparently

promised the leaders in Congress that he would approve the measure when it reached his desk. This seemed to the Congressional leaders "a deliberate act of bad faith." When Tyler was a small boy in Virginia he attended a school taught by one John McMurdo, who was careful not to spoil the child by sparing the rod. Tyler remarked at a later time that "it was a wonder he did not whip all the sense out of his scholars." Clay and some of the other public men of the time would probably agree that he did so quite effectively in at least one conspicuous instance.

Tyler was born in Virginia in the second year of Washington's first administration and was graduated from William and Mary College at the age of 17. While in college he became interested in history, poetry and music and became, like Jefferson, a skillful violinist. Two years after his graduation, he was admitted to the bar and was soon after called into public life. He served in the state legislature, the national House of Representatives and in the United States Senate. He also served as Governor of Virginia and Chancellor of William and Mary College. He was a man of no mean oratorical

ability and was always a factor to be reckoned with while in Congress. He opposed the Bank and condemned the "gag rule" against which John Quincy Adams spoke so effectively. Referring to the Bank as "the original sin against the Constitution," he exclaimed, "Shall I permit this serpent, however bright its scales or erect its mien, to exist by and through my vote?" He had his own ideas on all public issues. They were not necessarily reasonable or right but they were honest and his own. He also had the courage of his convictions. On one occasion in the Senate of the United States, he cast a solitary negative vote and on another, while President, he spurned a compromise, denouncing it as "a contemptible subterfuge, behind which he would not skulk." Clay persistently underrated him. "Tyler dares not resist," said he. "I'll drive him before me," to which Tyler, with his bristles all set, retorted, "I pray you to believe that my back is to the wall, and that, while I shall deplore the assaults, I shall, if practicable, beat back the assailants;" and it must be admitted that he did put up a stiff fight on many occasions. One should not be deceived by appearances, however. In spite of these

facts, President Tyler was not a constructive statesman with penetrating insight or breadth of vision. Mere stubbornness sometimes masks under the guise of strength. Tyler also lacked those indefinable personal qualities which are necessary to true leadership.

In some respects, Tyler's political preferment was greater than his talents would seem to justify. He had none of that self-abnegation which comes to the humble-minded. He was exceedingly proud of the social standing of his family and considered himself quite infallible in his political opinions. He was correspondingly intolerant of the views of others and yet he did have a certain suavity of manner which was very attractive. "He was a man of talents and a gentleman, but not a great man."

After retiring from the presidency in March, 1845, Tyler took up his abode on an estate beautifully situated on the bank of the James river and to which he gave the redolent name of "Sherwood Forest." There he lived a quiet but influential life until the time of his death seventeen years later. He took a lively interest in all national affairs and was a leader in the secession movement, although by no means rad-



ical in his views. His ashes now repose in Hollywood Cemetery, Richmond, a few yards from the grave of James Monroe.

It is interesting to note at this point that Tyler was the first vice-president to succeed to the presidency. On the whole it must be confessed that the arrangement for the election and succession of the vice-president, prescribed in the twelfth amendment to the Constitution, has not been entirely successful. It was thought by the framers of the document that the vice-president would be one of the leading men of the nation and also the "heir apparent" to the throne. This was true in the cases of John Adams and Jefferson but the custom soon lapsed. For 24 years after Jefferson's term of office, it was the custom in the Republican party to nominate the Secretary of State for the presidency but since Jackson's time there has been no fixed rule in this regard. The twelfth amendment, adopted in 1801, does not appear to have given satisfactory results. Gouverneur Morris opposed it at the time on the ground that a man expressly elected to that "ambiguous position" would not usually be of the first rank. He preferred the older method whereby an Elector

voted for two men without specifying which one he preferred for President. The fears of Morris were well founded. The vice-presidency is too often used to conciliate a "minority faction" or to comply with certain geographical considerations. The natural fitness of the candidate for the possible duties of the office are not considered.

James K. Polk was certainly the least conspicuous man who had ever been put forth by any political party for the presidency of the United States. He was a most uninspiring candidate whose views were politically "discreet" and not too well known. He was, therefore, in the language of politics, an "available" candidate. He was a "dark horse" and his nomination was the result of a stampede on the part of those who for one reason or another were opposed to the other and more prominent candidates. "Polk, Great God, what a nomination!" was the remark of Governor Letcher of Kentucky when he heard that the Democratic National Convention of 1844 had passed by Tyler, Van Buren and Calhoun and had nominated James K. Polk of Tennessee.

Polk was born in North Carolina in 1795 and



was the oldest of a family of ten children. His ancestors came from Ireland and the name was originally Pollock, not Polk. His father was a farmer and surveyor and appears to have lived in prosperous and comfortable circumstances. The young Polk was well educated, having been graduated from the University of North Carolina at the age of 23. He made a good record in college—a remarkable one in some respects. The year after his graduation he took up the study of law, was admitted to the bar in due time and was building up a very successful practice when called into public life. Although born in North Carolina, his active career was identified with the State of Tennessee, where the family had taken up its abode when the young James was 11 years of age. He was elected to Congress and was Speaker of the House of Representatives at the time that John Quincy Adams was leading the fight for the right of petition. He was later Governor of Tennessee and was twice defeated for the same position. In the course of his political campaigns he became an effective public speaker and was often referred to by admiring friends as “the Napoleon of the stump.” Looking back

upon Polk's career one almost suspects that there might have been a slight tinge of sarcasm lurking in this appellation. Polk did have his good qualities, however. He was thoroughly honest and independent. His motives were pure and his ideals high. His will was of iron and his purpose definitely fixed. He was intensely religious and his private life was above reproach. He was, however, so enamored of the wisdom and righteousness of his own views that he had small capacity for harmonious action with other men. As a result of this weakness, his administration was characterized by an unusual amount of factional controversy.

Polk's nomination was more or less accidental—the result of a fortuitous combination of circumstances. His election, however, was not so. It was largely due to the fact that he made a candid and straightforward pronouncement upon the leading issue of the day—the annexation of Texas—with no attempt at evasion or “beating ’round the bush.” In April of 1844, he declared himself in favor of “the immediate re-annexation of Texas to the government and territory of the United States.” And he stood by his guns consistently throughout the cam-

paign. His opponent, Henry Clay, on the other hand, a far abler man, by the way, declared against immediate annexation. He then proceeded to explain this declaration and later explained his explanation to such an extent that the people became confused and really did not know just where Clay stood. Polk reaped the reward of his candor and consistency.

In looking back over Polk's administration of four years—like Hayes, Polk announced when he accepted the nomination that he would not be a candidate for a second term—it is extremely difficult to account for these extravagant words from the pen of George Bancroft, the noted historian: "His (Polk's) administration, viewed from the standpoint of results, was perhaps the greatest in our national history, certainly one of the greatest." It is well to remember in this connection that these words were written forty years after the close of Polk's administration and by one who served in that administration as Secretary of the Navy. It may be that an honest friendship for the President warped the judgment of the historian. Polk was not a great or a brilliant man and the results of his administration are not

outstanding. On the contrary, he was rather mediocre as a public man, narrow in his vision, and intensely partisan. The results of the administration accorded nicely with the talents of its chief.

Zachary Taylor, like Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison, owed his election to military glory rather than to prominence in civil life. In fact Taylor was elected to the presidency of the United States upon the same basis that the giant guard or the dodging half-back is sometimes elected to the presidency of his class in college.

Taylor was a member of an old but not a particularly illustrious Virginia family. His early days were spent on a farm in the back country where opportunities for education and general culture were very meager. There was, however, abundant opportunity for military service and in due course of time this hardy lad of the frontier developed into an effective Indian fighter and later into the "Old Rough and Ready" of the Mexican War. When nominated for the presidency by the Whig party in 1848 over Clay, Webster and other leaders, his views were "unknown and undeveloped." He had no

political ambitions or aspirations but wished only, when he retired from the army, to spend the remainder of his days on "a stock farm in the hills." No platform was adopted by the nominating convention. None seemed necessary. As one of his supporters remarked: "General Taylor was able and honest and could be trusted to do the right thing." He did do the right thing according to his best lights. He was a man of rugged honesty, high character and strong personality and these qualities combined with his courage and common sense might have given the country a strong administration of public affairs, had his life been spared. He died in the White House on July 9, 1850, after a service of only sixteen months. He was buried near Louisville, Kentucky, where a fine granite shaft, 37 feet high, marks his resting place. He was succeeded by the Vice-President, Millard Fillmore, who thus became the second "accidental President" of the United States.

Fillmore was a native of New York and, like Garfield and Lincoln, fought his way up from grinding poverty to the chief magistracy of the Republic. His early surroundings and oppor-

tunities were not promising. He attended the back-woods school for three months each winter and thus had, as one of his biographers has remarked, abundant opportunity for "forgetting during the summer what he acquired in the winter." His home life was also uninspiring in most respects. His father's library is said to have consisted of two books—"the Bible and a collection of hymns." "He never saw a copy of *Shakespeare*, or *Robinson Crusoe*, a history of the United States, or even a map of his own country, until he was 19 years of age!" As an apprentice to a trade at 14, he had a sad and unpleasant experience which caused him to abandon this project for the study of law. His entry upon his chosen profession was considered auspicious. He won his first case and with it a fee of four dollars. He was later elected to Congress where, as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, he had a valuable legislative experience. In this respect, he had a great advantage over his immediate predecessor in office, and he differed from him in many other respects as well. He was notably less independent. Clay and other Whig leaders found him more pliant and more inclined "to listen to



reason," as they put it. He did not approach Clay, or Webster, or Seward in ability, but as a President he was safe, honest and worthy.

Second-rate men were now becoming fashionable in the presidency of the United States. Franklin Pierce was elected to that office in preference to many other men of superior ability. Pierce, a Democrat and strict constructionist, was a native of New Hampshire where his father was a farmer. He entered Bowdoin College in 1820 and was graduated four years later, standing third in his class. Among his college mates were the poet Longfellow, and his intimate personal friend and biographer, Nathaniel Hawthorne. After his graduation he studied law and became a successful practitioner. He sat in both houses of Congress but finally resigned his seat in the Senate to resume the practice of his profession. The Mexican War, however, called him into the public service again and he distinguished himself by conspicuous personal bravery. In the convention of 1852, Pierce was, like his predecessor, a "dark horse." His name did not appear until the forty-ninth ballot. He was nominated on the fifty-second over James Buchanan, Stephen

A. Douglas and William L. Marcy—all abler men than he, but not so “available” from the political standpoint. Pierce’s “exquisite urbanity” aided him in the campaign as well as in the convention.

One of Pierce’s biographers, Mr. Bainbridge Wadleigh sums up his characteristics as follows: “As an advocate he was never surpassed, if ever equalled, at the New Hampshire bar. He had the external advantages of an orator, a handsome, expressive face, an elegant figure, graceful and impressive gesticulation, and a clear, musical voice, which kindled the blood of his hearers like the notes of a trumpet, or melted them to tears by his pathos. His manner had a courtesy that sprang from the kindness of his heart and contributed much to his political and professional success. His perceptions were keen, and his mind seized at once the vital points of a case, while his ready command of language enabled him to present them to an audience so clearly that they could not be misunderstood. He had an intuitive knowledge of human nature, and the numerous illustrations that he drew from the daily lives of his strong-minded auditors made his speeches doubly effective. He



was not a diligent student, nor a reader of many books, yet the keenness of his intellect and his natural capacity for reasoning often enabled him, with but little preparation, to argue successfully intricate questions of law."

The Southern Democrats favored Pierce for a second term but the more moderate men did not; and James Buchanan, Minister to England, was nominated and elected in 1856.

Buchanan, a Pennsylvania man, was well known in public life for many years before he became President of the United States. After being graduated from Dickinson College in 1809, he studied law but soon the allurements of public life drew him away from his profession. A Jacksonian in politics, he sat in the House of Representatives and in the Senate and also served as foreign minister and cabinet member. In all of these positions, he rendered an honest and acceptable service to the country. While not as decisive and as out-spoken as many of his predecessors, he did, at times, express his views in no uncertain way. In 1852, he opposed the candidacy of General Scott for the presidential nomination. "Beware," he said, "of elevating to the highest civil trust the commander of your

victorious armies." He was, however, careful to differentiate between the professional soldier and the soldier who came to the defense of his country in the time of crisis.

The closing years of Buchanan's life were spent in a quiet but influential retirement at his country home, "Wheatland," about a mile from Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

While personally attractive and fairly successful as a diplomat, Buchanan did not prove a capable executive in the time of national stress. Dr. Von Holst's view is, however, undoubtedly extreme. He speaks of the timidity, the moral cowardice, the dilatoriness, the indecision and the lack of statesmanlike qualities of the President and refers to him in connection with the events of 1859 as "a weak-kneed old man." George Ticknor Curtis, the noted constitutional historian, errs, but not so grievously, on the other side, when he says, "No man was ever treated with greater injustice than he was during the last seven years of his life by a large part of the public. Men said he was a secessionist; he was a traitor; he had given away the authority of the government; he had been weak and vacillating; he had shut his eyes when men

about him, the very ministers of his cabinet, were plotting the destruction of the union; he was old and timid; he might have crushed an incipient rebellion, and he encouraged it. But he bore all this with patience and dignity, forbearing to say anything against the new administration, and confident that posterity would acknowledge that he had done his duty. . . . Mr. Buchanan's loyalty to the constitution of the United States was unbounded. He was not a man of brilliant genius, nor did he ever do any one thing to make his name illustrious and immortal, as Webster did when he defended the constitution against the heresy of nullification. But in the course of a long, useful, and consistent life, filled with the exercise of talents of a fine order and uniform ability, he had made the constitution of his country the object of his deepest affection, the constant guide of all his public acts."

To sum up, then, two of the nine Presidents of this period—Jackson and Van Buren—have been generally underestimated; two—Harrison and Taylor—were military heroes; two others—Tyler and Fillmore—were accidents, somewhat distressing but not fatal in character, and

the remaining three—Polk, Pierce, and Buchanan—were, it must be admitted, rather commonplace men for the high office of the presidency. Polk was an obscure man, a compromise candidate, and the strongest point in his favor was his advocacy of the annexation of Texas. Pierce was also a “dark horse” and his nomination quite took away the breath of Stephen A. Douglas. “Alas!” he remarked, “from this time forth no private citizen is safe.” Buchanan was the strongest and best known of the three and has been, I think, blamed over much for his seeming apathy during the closing months of his administration.

FROM LINCOLN TO WILSON

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## CHAPTER III

### FROM LINCOLN TO WILSON

THE Presidents of the United States may, roughly speaking, be divided into three classes, considering Jackson and Lincoln as dividing lines. The men of greatest ability fall in the first class—from Washington to Jackson; those of the least ability in the second class—from Jackson to Lincoln; while the Presidents since Lincoln occupy an intermediate position.

Lincoln was, by common consent, the ablest of the Presidents with the possible exception of the first, and some would not even except Washington. Upon this point of contention, however, let us not tarry. Such comparisons at best are rather ungracious, and in this particular case are of little avail on account of the marked dissimilarity between the two men. Lincoln was unlike other men. He has been called "the most individual man who ever lived." Comparisons with other public men

are thus made difficult. It is well nigh futile to philosophize about the personality of Lincoln, and this for two reasons which at first thought seem paradoxical. In the first place little can be added to the world's knowledge of his career, and in the second place he is as yet an unsolved mystery. His history has been studied with greater zeal than the history of any other American. In 1909, his centenary year, every scrap of available information touching upon his career or personality was eagerly sought after and carefully scrutinized. And yet we do not fully know and understand the man. At the close of a learned and discriminating biography Mr. John T. Morse remarks: "But Lincoln stands apart in striking solitude,—an enigma to all men. . . . Let us be content with this fact. Let us take him simply as Abraham Lincoln, singular and solitary, as we all see that he was; let us be thankful if we can make a niche big enough for him among the world's heroes, without worrying ourselves about the proportion which it may bear to other niches; and there let him remain forever, lonely, as in his strange lifetime, impressive, mysterious, unmeasured, and unsolved."



It is, of course, too early to venture anything but a tentative opinion in regard to the Presidents since Lincoln's time; and yet there are some facts which seem quite definitely settled and a few personal characteristics which appear to be unmistakable.

Andrew Johnson seems from this distance to have been a narrow-minded, stubborn man of strong personality. He was the natural product of his heredity and environment. Apprenticed to a tailor at ten, he was taught the alphabet by his fellow workmen and later learned to read almost unaided. His wife taught him to write but he was never able to use the pen with ease until he had been in Congress. As the "Mechanic Governor" of Tennessee he showed a natural sympathy with the working classes, and as a member of the United States Senate he assailed secession and the South with a virulence almost unparalleled. It was his unionism and his geographical location rather than his ability or achievements which placed him on the Republican ticket with Lincoln in 1864. He had always been a Democrat and in his letter of acceptance he disclaimed any departure from Democratic principles; but ac-

cepted the nomination, as he put it, upon the ground of "the higher duty of first preserving the government."

General Grant was the most famous man to occupy the presidential office in this latter period. Although distinctively a military man, he was by no means unskilled in statecraft. In fact he was remarkably successful as an executive considering his lack of preparation for the presidency. Up to the time of his nomination in 1868 he had never taken any active part in politics and had voted for only one presidential candidate—James Buchanan—a Democrat. In early life he had had some affiliation with the Whigs, but had never been a pronounced party man; in fact several prominent Democratic leaders had interviewed him in regard to accepting the Democratic nomination for the presidency only a short time before he was nominated by the Republicans. The decisiveness of his military temperament made him an efficient executive in some respects, but his unbounded faith in his friends and in the integrity of his appointees led to several governmental scandals during his administration. Absolutely honest himself, he was slow to suspect

others, and in more than one instance he shut the door with a bang and locked it after the horse had been stolen. As General Horace Porter once remarked: "Wherever he placed trust he reposed rare confidence, until it was shaken by actual proofs of betrayal. This characteristic of his nature led him at times to be imposed upon by those who were not worthy of the faith he placed in them; but persons that once lost his confidence never regained it."

When thoroughly aroused he could lash the money changers from the temple. In 1875, for example, it became evident that several government officials were putting their hands into the funds collected from the manufacture of whisky. President Grant issued a vigorous order for their arrest and prosecution, closing the document with the famous words: "Let no guilty man escape." Some of the offenders were powerful in politics and had influential friends but these facts did not save them from the prison bars. Grant purged the revenue service and, as is usually the case, was grossly maligned as his reward. These misrepresentations, however, did not lessen his popularity either at home or abroad. Only a short time

after this episode he started upon his tour of the world and was accorded such receptions as have never been given to any other man. His wife went with him on his journey and later remarked that "having learned a lesson from her predecessor, Penelope, she accompanied her Ulysses in his wanderings around the world."

Rutherford B. Hayes is not usually thought of as one of the great Presidents and perhaps should not be so considered; and yet I have a feeling that in the future his name will be written much larger than it is at the present time. Conditions have not been favorable for an early recognition of his excellencies. Blaine, and not he, was the leading candidate for the Republican nomination in 1876, and the dispute over his election has hung like a dark cloud over his administration. Hayes was, nevertheless, one of the best of men and an able man in addition. With him a new era in American history begins—the period of the United Nation. The country had just emerged from the dark shadows of the Civil War, and the so-called "Southern Question" had appeared for the last time in American politics in the election of 1876. An era of peace and good will was beginning

and Hayes was just the man to take the lead. Being of a conciliatory disposition, he appointed David M. Key, a Democrat and former Confederate soldier, to a place in his cabinet, and one of the first acts of his administration was to recall the troops from the Southern States. He was also a tower of strength to the cause of civil service reform and his pithy epigram, "he serves his party best who serves his country best," has been quoted thousands of times by civil service reformers.

Although a man of conciliatory temperament he also had the courage of his convictions. This fact was evident when he removed certain powerful men in his own party because they were using their offices to manage and control political affairs rather than in the service of the people. He also sent a clear and blunt statement of the facts to the Senate in a special message. Chester A. Arthur was one of the officials thus removed.

In another instance and at an earlier date he gave evidence of his patriotism and high sense of duty. During the war he was nominated by one of the Ohio districts for a seat in the House of Representatives. He was in the field at the

time and one of his friends suggested that he get a leave of absence from the army for the purpose of making a canvass of the district. His reply was this: "Your suggestion about getting a furlough to take the stump was certainly made without reflection. An officer fit for duty, who at this crisis would abandon his post to electioneer for a seat in Congress, ought to be scalped." He remained at his post of duty and was elected by a majority of twenty-four hundred.

What President Hayes *was* is really more important than what he did. The late Carl Schurz was one of many to testify to his moral worth. Mr. Schurz was Secretary of the Interior in Mr. Hayes's cabinet and consequently knew him in an intimate way. "The uprightness of his character," said Mr. Schurz, "and the exquisite purity of his life, public as well as domestic, exercised a conspicuously wholesome influence, not only upon the *personnel* of the governmental machinery, but also upon the social atmosphere of the national capital while he occupied the White House." In the words of a noted preacher, "purity has been the crowning quality of all the epoch-making men." It

may be too much to claim that Rutherford B. Hayes was an epoch-making man, but that he was pure in thought and act no one can deny.

James A. Garfield, the successor of Mr. Hayes in the presidential office, was a man of fine character and good ability whose career was full of promise at the time of his tragic death. Mr. Garfield's successor was Chester A. Arthur, a machine politician, whose nomination for the vice-presidency had been made, not upon the basis of merit, but as a concession to the Grant adherents and the New York "stalwarts." There are many points of similarity between the circumstances attending the nomination of Mr. Arthur in 1880 and those under which the vice-presidential candidate was placed upon the Republican ticket in the summer of 1908. Notwithstanding his somewhat objectionable record as a politician, however, Mr. Arthur gave the country a conservative and dignified, if not an aggressive, administration.

Grover Cleveland, the only Democratic President since the Civil War, aside from President Wilson, was, I think, the strongest and most useful executive from Lincoln to Roosevelt. Mr. Cleveland was not a man of fine fiber;



neither did he possess that delicate sense of the proprieties and ethical niceties which characterized Mr. Hayes and Mr. Garfield; yet he was a man of sound judgment, bold initiative, splendid courage, and robust honesty. His administrations were vigorous, wholesome, and business-like and his policies were far-sighted. In the last few years public opinion in this country has been drifting, slowly but surely, towards the policy outlined in his famous tariff message of December, 1887.

Benjamin Harrison was President of the United States for only one term and no event of unusual importance is connected with his administration; yet for intellectual power Mr. Harrison was probably not surpassed by any American President. The ninety-four impromptu speeches which he made during the campaign of 1888 and the one hundred and forty short addresses delivered in thirty-one days during his trip to the Pacific Coast and return are little less than marvels of their kind. The average *extempore* campaign speech in the United States is not an impressive utterance. It usually begins with a compliment, sometimes forced, to the people or the locality where the



speech is being delivered. Then follows, perhaps, a mild pleasantry, more or less obvious in character. Next in order will come a few conventional phrases and high sounding platitudes. A fair modicum of buncombe, not a little claptrap, and perhaps a dash of demagogery, prejudice, and partisanship are added to make an appearance of strength and to arouse enthusiasm. The orator tries to take himself seriously and so do his auditors, but none of us in our saner moments are profoundly impressed when we are told that our geese are all swans. What a striking contrast we find in Benjamin Harrison's short addresses! One marvels that the terse and polished sentences so heavily freighted with meaning and so appropriate to the audience and to the occasion could have been turned off with no apparent effort or preparation.

A man of Mr. Harrison's supreme intellectuality must of necessity be a man of positive convictions. This fact cropped out in the early part of his presidency. There were those who freely predicted that Mr. Blaine, the Secretary of State, and not he, would be the real President of the United States. This delusion was soon dispelled. The lapse of time will, in all

probability, cause us to revise our estimates of the acts and capabilities of our recent Presidents and I have a feeling that when Benjamin Harrison is viewed in his true historical perspective he will appear much larger and more important than he now does.

I do not feel, however, that the same will be true of President McKinley. His tragic and untimely death and more particularly his loveable personality and the purity of his life have given his contemporaries an exaggerated notion of his strength and importance as a public man. A sensitive man of excessive amiability and shrinking conservatism can hardly be expected to dominate affairs with the bold initiative of a true leader. He naturally becomes a follower rather than a leader, an interpreter rather than a creator of public opinion.

Now what shall we say of the successor to President McKinley? That man would be indeed rash who would attempt at this time to pass anything like a final judgment upon the ability and services of Theodore Roosevelt; but that he is a man of unusual ability and one who has rendered a valuable service to the country, few, I think, will deny. Some, no doubt, would

like to see in the chief executive a greater degree of presidential dignity, with less of impulse and more of reason. Many regret that in the organization of Ananias Clubs Mr. Roosevelt has put so much emphasis upon Touchstone's advanced degrees of the lie. They would prefer the "retort courteous," or the "quip modest," or even the "reply churlish," to the "countercheck quarrelsome," the "lie circumstantial," or the "lie direct." In spite of all this, however, it is safe to say that Mr. Roosevelt is a man of tremendous motive power, physical as well as mental, and that he has stirred up the dry bones of conventionality in a most refreshing if not a dignified way; and I should not be surprised if the historian of the future were to set Mr. Roosevelt down as the chief leader in the present civic renaissance and the first apostle in what President Angell once termed "The Age of the Quickened Conscience."

It is likewise too early to look upon President Taft's administration as a matter of history. Judged superficially, it would seem to have been a partial failure; but judged from the standpoint of actual achievement it was by no

means so. Mr. Taft suffered, as Van Buren did, in comparison with his predecessor, and he was not always happy in the choice of his advisors. He was also, I have no doubt, often compelled by the demands of practical politics to do things which must have been exceedingly distasteful to him. In so far as personal character and high ideals are concerned, Mr. Taft will compare favorably with any of his predecessors in the presidential office. The eight votes in the Electoral College do not represent the estimate which the American people have put upon the character and services of President Taft.

President Wilson is a type of man comparatively new to American politics. The type is familiar enough in Europe but not in the United States. This type is a power in the governments of Europe and if President Wilson's two administrations should meet with the general approval of the American people—and I can see no reason now why they should not do so—the results will be far-reaching. It cannot be denied that a large part of the people are tired of the old-school politician and his "practical" methods and are ready to welcome a new order

of things. Some have been disappointed with the results of the first administration. Possibly they may have expected too much. At any rate it should be remembered that a President is far more independent and free to act in his second administration than in his first. The outcome will be awaited eagerly and, I trust, sympathetically by patriotic Americans.



THE ETHICS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL  
CAMPAIGN





## CHAPTER IV

### THE ETHICS OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

ONE of the chapters of Lord Bryce's famous work, *The American Commonwealth*, is entitled, "Why Great men are not chosen Presidents." Near the close of the chapter he gives this interesting summary: "We may now answer the question from which we started. Great men are not chosen Presidents, firstly, because great men are rare in politics; secondly, because the method of choice does not bring them to the top; thirdly, because they are not, in quiet times, absolutely needed."

Such a statement as this should furnish food for reflection. While I am not prepared to admit, without qualification, that "Great men are not chosen Presidents," we must all acknowledge, I think, that there is a measure of truth in the comment of Lord Bryce. While with certain exceptions the Presidents of the United States have been great men and truly repre-

sentative of the nation, it must seem regrettable to every student of our history that we have not been able to utilize in the presidential office the superior abilities of such men as Hamilton, Webster, Clay, Calhoun, Blaine, Seward and Sumner. As a general rule, we may say that the presidential office has been filled by our great but not always by our greatest men. There are reasons for this state of things. It is undoubtedly true that business and the professions, rather than politics, have attracted the best talent of the nation and will continue to do so until a public career is made more attractive by being made more continuous and dignified. It is also true, as Lord Bryce says, that great men "are not in quiet times, absolutely needed." It is quite probable also that some of our statesmen of superior ability, such as Clay and Sumner, would have been only moderately successful as chief executives. It is quite possible that a man of less ability but of different temperament might have given the country a more satisfactory administration of public affairs.

Lord Bryce also refers to "the method of choice." This is the part of his comment to which I wish to give a more extended consid-

eration. It seems to me that the best talent of the nation will not be attracted to the presidential office while the methods of the political campaign remain as they now are. A glance at the ethics of the presidential campaign in the United States is necessary to an adequate comprehension of this phase of the subject.

The student of current politics might easily become pessimistic and cynical as he considers the methods which are employed in the average American political campaign. No stone, apparently, is left unturned, and the end justifies the means. The speeches are bombastic and sensational; personalities are freely indulged in; principles are often lost sight of; and the cry of fraud is raised after every election. Money is freely used; some of it legitimately, more of it corruptly, and the partisan press is vindictive, mendacious, and unprincipled. Political morals seem to be at a low ebb, and if the observer did not employ the comparative method he would undoubtedly be justified in drawing some very serious conclusions. The comparative method, however, has its comforts. It is only by comparing the present with the past that progress can be noted; and when we do

this we see that the present deplorable campaign methods were preceded by others of a still more deplorable character. In other words, while the methods of recent political campaigns are far from ideal, they are, for the most part, a vast improvement upon those of almost any other epoch in our history.

We reverence the Fathers of the Republic; we defer to their opinions and ascribe to them an almost superhuman wisdom; we look upon their utterances as little less than inspired, and yet we find that they fared badly in the political discussions of their time. Neither their great service nor their high character sufficed to shield them from infamous calumnies. They exemplified Shakespeare's famous statement "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny."

We are accustomed now to look upon the members of the Constitutional Convention of 1787 as high-minded men of spotless integrity; and so they were, almost without exception. Yet many of these men, in fact, some of the ablest and best of them, were relentlessly vilified. James Wilson, a man of lofty motives and exceptional force of character and one of the

greatest of the constructive statesmen of the Convention, was referred to repeatedly by the papers of the time as "Jimmy," "James, the Caledonian," and the "lieutenant-general of the myrmidons of power." Robert Morris was "Bobby, the Cofferer," who wanted a new form of government because he was hopelessly in debt to the old; Gouverneur Morris was "Gouvero, the cunning man," and Thomas Mifflin was "Tommy," the quartermaster-general, who supported the new Constitution because he was \$400,000 short in his accounts. Even Benjamin Franklin did not escape the vile attacks, and he was virtually called a dotard because of his advanced years. In fact no man escaped, however patriotic his conduct or disinterested his motives.

Any one who imagines that Washington was universally met with garlands of flowers and pæans of praise, as at the Trenton bridge in 1789, will be rudely shocked by a perusal of the newspapers of the period. After serving his country, without money and without price, in the French and Indian War and the Revolution, as president of the Constitutional Convention and as President of the United States for two terms,

he retired on the 4th of March 1797 to his home at Mount Vernon. He had delivered his "Farewell Address," which fell like a benediction upon the American people. It would seem that "peace on earth and good will to men" might well be the chosen motto of the time, yet the Republican press was most vindictive in some instances. On the 6th of March, two days after his retirement, the *Aurora* published the following comment: "'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,' was the pious ejaculation of a pious man who beheld a flood of happiness rushing in upon mankind. If ever there was a time that would license the reiteration of the ejaculation, that time has now arrived, for the man who is the source of all the misfortunes of our country is this day reduced to a level with his fellow citizens, and is no longer possessed of power to multiply evils upon the United States. If ever there was a period for rejoicing, this is the moment. Every heart, in unison with the freedom and happiness of the people, ought to beat high with exultation that the name of Washington ceases from this day to give currency to political insults, and to legalize corruption. A new era is now opening upon us, an era



which promises much to the people, for public measures must now stand upon their merits, and nefarious projects can no longer be supported by a name. When a retrospect has been taken of the Washington administration for eight years, it is a subject of the greatest astonishment that a single individual should have cankered the principles of republicanism in an enlightened people just emerged from the gulf of despotism, and should have carried his designs against the public liberty so far as to have put in jeopardy its very existence. Such, however, are the facts, and with these staring us in the face, this day ought to be a jubilee in the United States." Such was the parting shot which the *Aurora* fired at the "Father of his Country!" It may not always be true that republics are ungrateful, but it is certainly true that the partisan press in a republic is without either gratitude or generosity.

We usually place Lincoln next to Washington in our national thinking. But he did not escape the despicable campaign methods of his time. He was abused in a coarse, brutal, and personal way. He was deserted by many in his hour of need who should have been his friends.

Thaddeus Stevens, leader of the House of Representatives, declared in 1864 that Arnold of Illinois was the only political friend that the President had in the lower house at that time. In the course of the same year the Freemont Club expressed its disgust at the "imbecile and vacillating" policy of President Lincoln. Wendell Phillips denominated Lincoln's administration "a civil and military failure." During the campaign of 1860 Phillips had been still more abusive. Referring to the obscurity of Lincoln at the time he asked with some indignation: "Who is this huckster in politics?" "Who is this county court advocate?" Phillips also published an article entitled "Abraham Lincoln, the Slave Hound of Illinois," the first sentence of which ran as follows: "We gibbet a Northern Hound to-day, side by side with the infamous Mason of Virginia." Lincoln's personal appearance was ridiculed in the papers of the day. He was stupid, vulgar, and repulsive. He was the ape, the gorilla, and by some it was said that African blood flowed in his veins. He was a coarse, uncouth clod-head, his grammar was perverted, and his rhetoric outrageous; notwithstanding the fact that we now look upon



his addresses and state papers as models of terse and forceful English.

In 1866 Mr. Edward A. Pollard, editor of the Richmond *Examiner*, said that "the new President (had) brought with him the buffoonery and habits of a demagogue of the backwoods." "We have already stated," he said, "that Mr. Lincoln was not elected President of the United States for any commanding fame, or for any known merit as a statesman. His panegyrists, although they could not assert for him a guiding intellect or profound scholarship, claimed for him some homely and substantial virtues. It was said that he was transparently honest. But his honesty was rather that facile disposition that readily took impressions from whatever was urged upon it. It was said that he was excessively amiable. But his amiability was animal. It is small merit to have a Falstaffian humor in one's blood. Abraham Lincoln was neither kind nor cruel, in the proper sense of these words, because he was destitute of the higher order of sensibilities.

"His appearance corresponded to his rough and uncultivated mind. His figure was tall and gaunt looking; his shoulders were inclined for-

ward; his arms of unusual length; and his gait astride, rapid, and shuffling. The savage wits in the Southern newspapers had no other name for him than the 'Illinois Ape.' "

It is needless, however, to multiply instances of this character. We are inclined, and with good reason, I think, to look upon Washington, Lincoln, Jefferson, Hamilton, John Adams, and John Quincy Adams as six of the greatest and best men in the history of the public life of the United States; and yet if we were to trust the testimony of the contemporary partisan press and of opposition campaign orators we would be forced to regard them as the most consummate villains of their time.

In making an optimistic comparison between the campaign methods of this and other days I do not mean to say that statements equally extreme and vituperative are not now sometimes made in the heat of a political campaign; but I am confident that they are neither so frequent nor so typical as they once were. Neither are they so effective in political contests. The people of to-day must be reached more largely through the intellect than through the emotions. They are not so easily deceived. They

have outlived, to a certain extent, their gregarious impulses and are not so easily herded or stampeded as they were a few generations ago. In fact, abuse, personalities, and bombast are likely to have a boomerang effect. When a prominent candidate for political office said some things, on the eve of a presidential election, about his opponent's sympathy for corporations and the use of corporate funds in the campaign, and was not able to prove his assertions, he must have been painfully aware of the fact that he had made a tactical blunder, to say the least. As soon as the fact is fully appreciated by our political leaders that these methods are really not effective, they will be wholly discarded.

Another improvement in the ethics of the campaign may be noted in the attitude which public men assume towards their political opponents. There has been, I am sure, in recent years, more of dignity and courtesy on the part of public men in their dealings with political rivals. "The blunt and irascible old John Adams," as his biographer in the *American Statesmen Series* calls him, was a really great man in many respects, and Thomas Jefferson

was a greater man, but the petty jealousies, bickerings, and animosities which existed between the two men redound to the glory of neither. Alexander Hamilton, next to Washington, was the most useful man of the constitutional period, and the most brilliant American of his time without any exception; yet he and Jefferson, as the latter expressed it, faced each other "like two fighting cocks in a pit." Neither was entirely candid, much less magnanimous. They must divide the dishonor.

Hamilton and John Adams were the two leading men in the Federalist party in 1800. Adams was the choice of his party for a second presidential term, and Hamilton, of course, was expected to support him. This he did outwardly, but under cover his attitude was treacherously hostile. He wrote a letter to be distributed, as he said, "in a judicious manner," on the "Public Conduct and Character of John Adams, Esq., President of the United States." In the course of this letter of fifty printed pages he attempted to show that Adams was entirely unfitted for the office which he held. He did not possess the talents necessary for the administration of the government. He had defects of

personal character which unfitted him for the presidency. He was an eccentric, vain, and jealous man, much given to foibles and crotchets; his French policy was pernicious; he had an ungovernable temper and gave way to paroxysms of anger, and had apparently none of those qualifications which a President of the United States should possess; yet, said Hamilton in conclusion, *I am advising my friends to vote for him nevertheless.* The letter was intended for secret distribution but a copy of it fell into the hands of Aaron Burr and was spread far and wide. The disclosure of this treachery apparently did not perceptibly lessen the prestige of Hamilton, yet I am confident that a similar piece of intrigue in our own day would relegate its author to political oblivion.

Again when Jefferson came to Washington City to assume his presidential duties on the 4th of March, 1801, he did not find his predecessor on hand to give him the customary greeting. His predecessor, John Adams, was petty enough to go out of town under cover of the night rather than extend his hand to his successful rival. Such a thing could hardly happen at the present time. Political contentions were

probably never more bitter in the United States than during the presidency of John Adams. "Men who had been intimate all their lives," wrote Jefferson, "cross the street to avoid meeting and turn their heads another way lest they should be obliged to touch their hats."

The "era of good feeling," too, is very largely a misnomer. It is commonly said that during the interval between the downfall of the Federalist party in the administration of Jefferson and the organization of the Whig party in the time of Jackson, the utmost of good feeling prevailed. It is true, of course, that party lines had vanished for the time being and party contentions had ceased, but a contest over principles was succeeded by a contest over individuals, and personal animosities were rife in this so-called "era of good feeling." The election of 1824 has been called the "scrub race" for the presidency. There were seventeen candidates and four of them—Jackson, Adams, Crawford, and Clay—received votes in the Electoral College. The issues were *men* rather than *principles*, and a deplorable scramble resulted in the course of which Mr. Jackson expressed his opin-



ion of Mr. Adams and Mr. Clay in terms more forcible than elegant.

Undoubtedly the most picturesque character of this period was the eccentric John Randolph of Roanoke. He was peculiar both mentally and physically. A Charleston bookseller put on record a description of his personal appearance in 1796, when he was approaching his majority—a description, by the way, which he never really outgrew. He was described as a “tall, gawky-looking, flaxen-haired stripling, apparently of the age from sixteen to eighteen, with a complexion of a good parchment color, beardless chin, and as much assumed self-confidence as any two-footed animal I ever saw.” Randolph, although a freak in some ways, was a man of real genius, a hard hitter, a good fighter, and remarkably effective in his public utterances. His sarcasm cut like acid, and his bold statements and unconventional phrases startled his audiences. When under the influence of liquor he was dashing, brilliant, and vitriolic. Under arid conditions he was much less interesting. He was quite impartial, too, in the bestowal of his rhetorical attentions. Practically all the leading

public men of the time experienced one or more of his classic flagellations. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Clay, and the two Adamses felt the sting of his whip-lash rhetoric on more than one occasion. For thirty years he availed himself of every opportunity to castigate the two Adamses, John and John Quincy. "The cub," said he, "is a greater bear than the old one." Whether sober or intoxicated, or in a state of semi-saturation, his invective was copious, continuous, and vehement, when devoting himself to these two New Englanders. Sometimes he couched his ideas in polished, stilted sentences with an Addisonian suggestion and again he employed phrases and comparisons reeking with vulgarity. In 1826 Randolph paid his respects to John Quincy Adams and his Secretary of State, Henry Clay, in a speech which, it was said, "exhausted the unrivalled resources of his vocabulary." "I was defeated," he exclaimed, "horse, foot, and dragoons,—cut up and clean broken down by the coalition of Blifil and Black George,—by the combination, unheard of till then, of the Puritan with the blackleg." He then took Mr. Clay's ancestors to task for bringing into the world "this being, so brilliant



yet so corrupt, which, like rotten mackerel by moonlight, shined and stunk." President Adams retorted by applying to Randolph the lines of Ovid in which the poet draws a picture of Envy:

"His face is livid, gaunt his whole body;  
His breast is green with gall; his tongue drips  
poison."

And all this, let it be remembered, was in the "era of good feeling."

It should not be thought, however, that John Randolph was a mere peddler of billingsgate. He was really a man of ability and influence, and notwithstanding his pitch-fork tendencies did have some lucid intervals and was not always indecent. He was a peculiar compound. He had some of the vulgarity of a river boatman, a genius for wordcraft similar to that of the late John J. Ingalls, and a dash of the brilliant meanness of Roscoe Conkling.

It is noticeable also that the "hurrah element" so prominent in the campaigns of a generation or two ago now serves, when it appears, only to provoke mirth and laughter. For sheer froth and nonsense the campaign of 1840 is without a parallel in our history. When the Whigs

nominated General Harrison for the presidency an eastern paper spoke contemptuously of him and advised him not to aspire to that high office but to go back to his log cabin and drink his hard cider in an environment of coon skins. Almost by common consent the log cabin, the coon skin, and the cider cask became the Whig emblems of the campaign. Carl Schurz remarks in his *Life of Henry Clay*: "There has probably never been a presidential campaign of more enthusiasm and less thought than the Whig campaign of 1840. As soon as it was fairly started, it resolved itself into a popular frolic. There was no end of monster mass meetings, with log cabins, raccoons, and hard cider. One half of the American people seemed to have stopped work to march in processions behind brass bands or drum and fife, to attend huge picnics, and to sing campaign doggerel about 'Tippecanoe and Tyler too.' The array of speakers on the Whig side was most imposing: Clay, Webster, Corwin, Ewing, Clayton, Preston, Choate, Wise, Reverdy Johnson, Everett, Prentiss, Thompson of Indiana, and a host of lesser lights. But the immense multitudes gathered at the meetings came to be amused, not to be instructed. They

met, not to think and deliberate, but to laugh and shout and sing."

Some of the speakers did attempt to discuss serious matters in a serious way, but it was difficult, if not impossible, to do so in the midst of such surroundings. A Whig speech of 1840 to be in harmony with its setting should read about as follows: "Fellow citizens: We are gathered together on a memorable occasion. We are surrounded by the revered emblems of our nationality. The flag of our country floats over our heads, the cider from our orchards flows at our feet, and the log cabin with its door covered with coon skins stares us in the face. The Whig party presents to you a candidate who stands as the living embodiment of these national emblems. We hold that any man who spent his boyhood days in an American log cabin is fit to grace the White House at Washington. We also hold that any man who has sipped the cider from our hillsides is abundantly able to quaff the champagne of the presidential mansion; and this after all, fellow citizens, is the main duty of our chief executive. It is also no small recommendation, my friends, that the Whig candidate is able to skin a coon with neatness and

dispatch and to nail the pelt, well stretched, to his lowly cabin door. As it has been said by some one, if you allow me to write the songs of the nation, I care not who makes the laws, so I say, if you allow me to skin the coons of the nation I care not who formulates her statutes. I am aware of the fact, fellow citizens, that the chief executive of this nation is sometimes called upon to appoint a cabinet, to give his sanction to legislation, to negotiate a treaty, or to direct the movements of the army or navy, but I prefer in my remarks to-day to say nothing of these things, but to confine myself to essentials. It is upon this platform, fellow citizens, that the Whig party makes its appeal for the suffrage of a sovereign and enlightened people."

The most effective campaign orator of this period was Thomas Corwin, of Ohio, better known as "Tom" Corwin. Indeed it would be difficult to imagine a combination of talents better adapted to campaign speaking than were those of Corwin. The testimony of men who knew and heard him repeatedly is all to this effect. Hugh McCulloch in his *Men and Measures of half a Century* says of Corwin: "Men

would travel twenty or thirty miles to listen to the matchless orator, and even his political opponents could not help joining in the applause which his speeches never failed to call forth. It was worth a Sabbath day's journey to hear 'Tom' Corwin tell a story. . . . He had always something good to say, and he never failed to be instructive as well as fascinating. His power over popular and promiscuous assemblies was immense. Plain farmers would not only travel long distances to hear him, but they would stand for hours under a burning sun or in a pelting rain, seemingly oblivious of everything but the speeches by which their attention was absorbed."

Corwin's oratory attracted attention in Congress as well as upon the stump. He was a member of the House of Representatives in 1840, during the Harrison campaign, and added to his laurels by a memorable speech made in reply to General Crary of Michigan. General Crary had criticised the military tactics of General Harrison, and particularly his generalship in the Battle of Tippecanoe. This put Corwin on his mettle. He took the floor and made an inimitable speech, of which Mr. McCulloch

speaks as follows: "In his off-hand reply to this speech Mr. Corwin gave free rein to the style in which he surpassed all men of his day. While he did not fail to vindicate Harrison's military capacity, as displayed in the battle, by apt references to the action of soldiers of acknowledged merit in somewhat similar circumstances, he overwhelmed his assailant with ridicule by showing what his opportunities had been for learning how battles should be fought. General Crary was a military general on a peace establishment. Taking advantage of this fact, Mr. Corwin described in his inimitable manner a Michigan militia parade with General Crary as the commanding figure; the troops in motion with hoes, axe-handles, and other deadly implements of war overshadowing the field; the general with his gaudy epaulets gleaming in the sun, mounted upon a crop-eared, bushy-tailed mare, fourteen hands high, riding gallantly in front, displaying the beauty of his steed and his superior horsemanship; and when the parade was over satisfying the thirst which his glorious labor has created with watermelons which he slashed with his mighty sword and shared with his heroic men. I recollect no



speech so provocative of hearty laughter as this speech of Mr. Corwin. His exaggerated but somewhat truthful description of a military parade (general-training, it was called) in the early days of the West, in the conduct of which General Crary was supposed to have acquired the knowledge that fitted him to criticise General Harrison's military character, was so absolutely funny that the House was convulsed with merriment, and Democrats as well as Whigs shouted as he went on until they were hoarse. To such a speech there could be no answer. General Crary subsided. He was never heard again in the House or in public in Michigan. 'Slain by Corwin,' was the return of the inquest over his political remains."

The campaign of 1848 exemplifies another peculiarity in our campaign methods. In that year the Whigs nominated General Taylor for the presidency upon the strength of his record in the Mexican War. Taylor at the time was not a Whig. He had never allied himself with any political party. In fact he had never voted. In addition to this he was such a novice in politics and statesmanship that even those who were most active in promoting his candidacy

smiled at his guilelessness. His views on civil affairs were unknown. Indeed it is fairly certain, in the light of subsequent developments, that he had no clearly defined views; yet he was preferred for the nomination to such men as McLean, Clayton, Clay, and Webster, and was moreover triumphantly elected. He was a great military hero and no questions were asked about his qualifications for the presidency;—an amiable weakness on the part of the American people which, it will be remembered, James Russell Lowell roundly satirized in the *Bigelow Papers*. Lowell puts General Taylor's answers to certain questions in the quaint Yankee dialect of Hosea Bigelow "an up-country farmer."

The absurdity of the whole situation must have impressed the thoughtful men of the day. It is not at all likely that the campaign of 1848 could be repeated with success at the present time.

The main purpose of the preceding sketch is to show that the evolution of our campaign methods during the last century and a quarter presents some encouraging features. While the methods employed in some of the more re-



cent political campaigns can hardly be called refined, they were, on the whole, an improvement upon those in vogue before the Civil War. The attitude of public men towards one another has been more fair and generous than in the days of John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. There are, of course, some exceptions to this rule which will readily occur to the reader's mind. The most marked exception of recent years is to be found in the campaign of 1912, and more particularly in that part of it involving the two leading candidates for the Republican nomination. On the whole, however, the political discussions of recent years have centered around *principles* rather than *men*.

The attitude of the press, too, shows a marked improvement. The rabid party organ is disappearing, and the tendency is for the really great and influential dailies of the country to become independent in politics. From the standpoint of truth and fair-dealing in political discussion the journalism of to-day still leaves much to be desired, and yet it marks a distinct advance over the journalism of a generation ago.

Again, the political fortunes of men are no

longer made or unmade by mere incidents. Non-essentials are no longer as influential as they once were. Torch-lights, log-cabins, coon skins, hard cider, umbrellas, canes, bandannas, high hats, fence rails, watermelons, dinner pails and blue jeans are no longer the deciding factors in American political campaigns. Neither are the people likely to be carried away by catch-words, such as "Tippecanoe and Tyler too," "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion," "54-40 or fight," and "The Full Dinner Pail." One President rode triumphantly into office upon the euphonious couplet:

"Hurrah for Polk and Annexation,  
Down with Clay and high Taxation,"

but it is not at all likely that another could be elected in a similar way.

While, on the whole, then, it would appear that the methods of the American political campaign have greatly improved in recent years it must be admitted that the campaign of 1912 had many regrettable features. There was a marked dip in the curve of progress; such, however, is the way in which civilization makes its advances.

In the first place, there was never a more bitter contest for the presidential nomination than the one between President Taft and Mr. Roosevelt in 1912. Mr. Roosevelt, with his characteristic determination and tremendous energy, "carried the war into Africa," and the President, apparently, felt compelled to adopt a similar kind of warfare. During the campaign, both before and after the Chicago Convention, the President did many things which must have been exceedingly distasteful to him. A campaign mapped out by "practical" politicians will inevitably contain many features which cannot commend themselves to a man of dignity and self-respect. A President of the United States, hurrying from city to city and from state to state, soliciting votes from the platform of a passenger coach, is not an edifying spectacle. The White House should be the official residence of the chief executive and not his political headquarters. The President's Secretary, whose salary is paid out of the public funds, should give his time and energy to the affairs of government rather than to the political interests of his chief. Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Cabinet members, Speakers, Sena-

tors, Representatives, and State Governors, should be compelled by public opinion, if not by their own sense of the proprieties of the case, to give their first and best efforts to the duties of their respective offices rather than to a pursuit of the presidency.

A fitting degree of dignity can never attach to the presidency of the United States so long as that office is made the object of a general scramble. The campaign of 1912, and more particularly the campaign for the Republican nomination, humiliated us in the eyes of European critics. Never in recent years has there been such a regrettable campaign, and it is the part of wisdom, now that it is all over, to profit by the experience thus gained.

There are some indications that we are going to do this. During the last campaign, President Wilson gave evidence of a high conception of the proprieties of politics, and since his inauguration has conducted himself in a most dignified and becoming manner. Then, too, public opinion is aroused upon this matter as never before in recent years. The attempt to amend the Constitution so as to provide for a single term of six years for the President is one

of the concrete results of this awakened sentiment. I sincerely hope that the attempt will succeed, but that the amendment will not be made to apply to any man who has already held the office. Even if the attempt should fail, its effect upon public opinion would be considerable and salutary.

A few other changes would also be helpful. If national nominating conventions are to continue to exist, they should be revised and reconstructed on a more equitable and truly representative basis. Sections of the country giving little or no support to a political party should have slight representation in the national councils of that party. The powers of the National Committee should also be reviewed. A body of men elected to-day as the result of more or less political manipulation should not be able, by means of technicalities of procedure, to thwart the wishes of a majority of the party four years hence. Then again, definite and thorough-going presidential preference primary laws should be passed in all the States and the primaries for all parties should be held on the same day and under exacting restrictions. All of these things would tend toward greater dignity and equity in

our campaign methods, and the campaign of 1912 will have served a good purpose if it aids in the consummation of these reforms. The campaign of 1916 has also taught us, I hope, that no party can succeed, however worthy and able its candidate, which does not put forth a definite and a constructive program. A campaign based largely on destructive criticism is not attractive. It is out of date and not in harmony with present day progress and ideals. The time will come also when the word "available" will lose its peculiar and technical meaning. A noted American publicist is said to have remarked to his friends who urged him to become a candidate for the presidency, "Gentlemen, let there be no mistake. I should make a good President, but a very bad candidate." This differentiation between the candidate and the President will not always obtain. ✓

27









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